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CENTRAL ASIA'S NATIONAL DRUG POLICY DIALOGUES SYSTEMATISATION REPORT

2023

**CENTRAL ASIA'S
NATIONAL DRUG
POLICY DIALOGUES
SYSTEMATISATION
REPORT**

Disclaimer

This Systematisation Report presents the main findings of a study carried out in the framework of the Central Asia Drug Action Programme – Phase 7 (CADAP 7) in the «Drug Policy» component.

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AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BOMCA	Border Management Programme in Central Asia
CADAP	Central Asian Drug Action Programme
CADCA	Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
CEI	Commonwealth of Independent States
DCA	Drug Control Agency
EU	European Union
FIAPP	International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight to AIDS
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDU	Injecting Drug Use
MDMA	3,4-Methylenedioxy-Methamphetamine
ME	Ministry of Education
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MH	Ministry of Healthcare
MHMI	Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry
MI	Ministry of Interior
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MJ	Ministry of Justice
NCMPDU	National Centre for Monitoring and Prevention of Drug Use
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIACDC	National Information Analytical Centre on Drug Control
NPS	New Psychoactive Substances
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PWID	People Who Inject Drugs
PLWH	People Living With HIV
RCCBVHH	Republican Centre for Control for blood-borne viral hepatitis and HIV
RCHPMC	Republican Centre for Health Promotion and Mass Communication
RPNC	Republican Psychiatry and Narcology Centre
RSPCMH	Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Mental Health

RSSPMCN	Republican Specialized Scientific and Practical Medical Centre of Narcology
SBNON	Service for Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking
SEP	Service for Execution of Punishment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States

Introduction

The drug phenomenon emerges as a persistent concern that has affected the international community for decades, manifesting a detrimental impact on people's health and well-being, as well as on the security and stability of societies. Drug trafficking, in particular, represents a major global challenge, with significant implications for the world economy and politics. On the other hand, year after year, different countries in the region are making greater efforts to understand the best strategies to reduce the harms associated with drug use in order to ensure the health and wellbeing of the population as a whole.

In Central Asia, the drug problem has been of particular concern because of its strategic location on the international drug trafficking route. The region is a major transit point for drugs produced in Afghanistan, which are then directed towards Europe and other parts of the world. This location has made the countries in the region particularly vulnerable to problems stemming from the drug phenomenon, as they are affected by drug trafficking and the growing demand for drugs in the region. Additionally, in recent years, Central Asia has experienced the emergence and proliferation of New Psychoactive Substances (hereafter NPS) through new sales channels that allow them to market and distribute these substances more covertly, making them harder for government authorities to detect. In addition, the Russian-initiated war in Ukraine has contributed significantly to the displacement of a significant number of the Russian population to the region, mainly young people with relative financial capacity, which also adds up to a factor of change in the country.

The Central Asian Drug Action Programme (hereafter CADAP 7) is an EU initiative that has been implemented in the region since 2000. CADAP 7 aims to strengthen the capacity of Central Asian countries to address the drug problem by improving regional cooperation, strengthening national policies and practices, and promoting a balanced and evidence-based response to the drug problem. In this regard, the holding of the various National Drug Policy Dialogue meetings, under the framework of CADAP 7 Outcome 1, is a sign of the commitment of the Central Asian countries and the EU to work together in the fight against drugs in the region.

It is important to note that the final recommendations presented in this report are of an interim nature, as it is necessary to move towards the next steps of Outcome 1 and to compare drug policies in Central Asian countries with actions carried out in different EU Member States. The aim is to identify possible sources of inspiration and to promote joint collaboration for the benefit of all parties involved. However, these aspects will be addressed in subsequent reports, in the fourth and fifth phases.

Objectives of the Systematisation Report

National Dialogues, under Outcome 1 of the CADAP 7 Programme, play an essential role in the Central Asian region to effectively address drug-related challenges. These dialogues serve as a space for different stakeholders to meet and collaborate, fostering the exchange of knowledge and experiences. **The following are the specific objectives achieved by holding these events:**

- **Create a space for exchange of knowledge and experience** to discuss needs and priorities related to the drug phenomenon in the region.
- **To encourage the participation of all stakeholders in the development of effective and evidence-based public policies** to address current challenges and opportunities in the Central Asian region.
- **To identify and analyse current challenges and opportunities** in the field of drug policy in the Central Asian region.
- **Generate consensus and commitment to a comprehensive and sustainable approach** to addressing drug-related challenges in the region.
- **To identify existing drug policies and programmes** in the Central Asian region.
- **To provide a platform for international cooperation and exchange of good practices** on drug policies in the Central Asian region.

In this regard, the Central Asia National Dialogues Systematisation Report aims to provide a comprehensive and detailed overview of the challenges and concerns raised during the National Dialogues in the five Central Asian countries. To achieve this, a comprehensive review of the available literature in each country and various research and analytical activities have been carried out. **Specific objectives of the Systematisation Report include the following:**

- **Assess the current state of drug policy** in each Central Asian country.
- **Identify challenges and opportunities** in implementing effective drug policies in the region.
- **Analyse the different perspectives and approaches** presented during the National Dialogues.
- **To understand the specific drug policy needs** of each country.
- **To offer reflections as preliminary recommendations** for improving drug policies in each of the countries and in the region as a whole.

Methodology of the Systematisation Report

The Systematisation Report of the National Dialogues in the Central Asia region has been carried out through a rigorous methodology that included several important steps. In the first deliverable of Outcome 1, the preliminary steps necessary to produce this report were set out. The various stages that have shaped the process of producing this Systematisation Report are detailed below:

- **Regular meetings with the national CADAP 7 teams.** Regular meetings have been held with the objective of fostering effective communication, coordination and information exchange. This has ensured effective collaboration in the development and planning of Phase 2 of Outcome 1.
- **Participation in the National Dialogues in the five Central Asian countries.** The Episteme Social team has attended and actively participated in the National Dialogues that have taken place in the five Central Asian countries under Phase 2 of Outcome 1 of the CADAP 7 Programme. This has allowed contributing with European perspectives and knowledge on drug-related issues.
- **Comprehensive review of documentation and literature related to the drug phenomenon in Central Asia.** A thorough analysis of the available documentation and literature on the drug phenomenon in Central Asia has been carried out. This process has allowed the Episteme Social team to obtain a complete and updated view of the context and the associated problems of this phenomenon in the region. The Systematisation Report is based on precise and detailed bibliographical references, which are presented at the foot of the page, thus supporting the information consulted.
- **Conducting interviews to obtain detailed information on the drug field in Central Asia.** Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with different representatives of various institutions, both governmental and civil society, related to the drug field in Central Asia. These interviews have provided detailed information and direct insights into the drug phenomenon in the region.
- **Administration of needs assessment questionnaires to understand drug-related challenges in Central Asian countries.** Needs assessment questionnaires have been designed and administered for Central Asian countries participating in the CADAP 7 Programme. The results of the questionnaires have led to a better understanding of the specific drug-related challenges in the region.
- **Participation of the Episteme Social team in the II Programme Steering Committee.** The Episteme Social team attended and actively participated in the II Programme Steering Committee, where a presentation was made on the activities carried out in the second phase of Outcome 1 on drug policies.
- **Analysis of the data collected to identify challenges and positive aspects of drug policies.** Analysis of the collected interview and questionnaire data has been carried out in order to identify both challenges and positive aspects of drug policies in the countries of the Central Asian region.
- **Drawing conclusions and preliminary reflections as a result of the analysis carried out.** Conclusions and reflections have been drawn as preliminary recommendations regarding drug policies in the Central Asian region, based on the comprehensive analysis of the data and information collected.

Systematisation Report of the National Drug Policy

Dialogue in Kazakhstan

CADAP 7 – Component 1: Drug Policy



1. Introduction

The Systematisation Report of the «National Drug Policy Dialogue» event provides a comprehensive analysis of the background, key findings, conclusions and preliminary recommendations related to drug policies in the Republic of Kazakhstan. This comprehensive analysis is based on active participation in the National Dialogue, supported by a thorough review of relevant documentation, as well as a detailed questionnaire and a series of subsequent in-depth individual interviews with selected participants of the meeting. The sources used in this analysis, summarised below, provided a solid information base.

- **Available documentation on drug policies in Kazakhstan.** Ten documents covering legal-normative and analytical issues of the drug situation in the country have been analysed.
- **«National Drug Policy Dialogue»**, attended by twenty-seven people from different ministries of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Non-Governmental Organisations, representatives of the EU and International Organisations, as well as representatives of FIIAPP and CADAP.
- **Semi-structured in-depth interviews.** To complement and deepen some of the issues raised in the National Dialogue, interviews were conducted with five of the people who had attended the meeting during the month of June 2023.
- **Needs assessment questionnaire**, which was sent to all institutions represented in the National Dialogue and was answered by ten representatives of these institutions during the month of June 2023.

Episteme Social conceived the National Dialogue in Kazakhstan as a unique opportunity to conduct a **comprehensive assessment of the country's drug policy needs**, considering the perspectives and opinions of all stakeholders. The main objective of this initiative is to generate a **detailed needs analysis**, which is reflected in this Kazakhstan-specific Systematisation Report.

In terms of the structure of this Systematisation Report for Kazakhstan, firstly, a **thorough analysis of the existing documentation on drug policy in Kazakhstan is undertaken**, exploring the legal background to drug policy in the country. Next, the **process of the «National Drug Policy Dialogue» is described in detail** and the main issues that emerged during this event are addressed. This is followed by **an in-depth analysis of the interviews** conducted with selected participants of the National Dialogue. This is followed by **the highlights of the needs assessment questionnaire** that was distributed to all the institutions present at the meeting. Once this disaggregated analysis has been completed, **a series of conclusions and reflections are presented, leading to the first preliminary recommendations.**

2. Analysis of documentation

In this «Analysis of documentation» section, we examine the legal situation regarding drugs in Kazakhstan, along with the programmes implemented by the state authorities. In addition, we carry out a comprehensive analysis of the current drug situation in the country, with the aim of gaining a more accurate and up-to-date picture of the drug problem.

2.1 Drug legislation in Kazakhstan

International legal instruments

Table 1 presents the international conventions related to the drug phenomenon to which Kazakhstan has acceded. These treaties reflect the country's unwavering commitment to combating drug-related issues by establishing an internationally recognised legal and policy framework to effectively address this global challenge.

Table 1. Ratification of Drug-related International Treaties in Kazakhstan¹

Treaty	State
Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961	29 April 1997 (Accession)
Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971	29 April 1997 (Accession)
United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988	29 April 1997 (Accession)

National legal instruments

In Kazakhstan, drug legislation is in a dynamic and diverse state, reflecting the country's commitment to addressing the challenges inherent in this global problem. Through a comprehensive and varied approach, a **solid regulatory framework has been established that seeks to effectively and efficiently address the different aspects related to the use, trafficking and production of narcotic substances.**

Kazakh legislation in the field of drugs **is distinguished by its comprehensive and balanced approach**, covering both prevention and treatment and the control of drug trafficking. Through collaboration and coordination between various actors, and by adopting evidence-based approaches, **the country has laid the foundations for a comprehensive and effective response to the drug challenge on its territory.**

¹ UNODC, 2022.

2.2 Drug policies in Kazakhstan

Strategies implemented

In 2000, the government authorities of Kazakhstan initiated the creation of a national drug strategy. In that year, the strategy was developed to address the challenge of drug dependence and drug business in the country through the implementation of different programmes.

- In May 2000, the «**Strategy for the fight against drug addiction and drug business in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the period 2001-2005²**» was approved with the main objective of ensuring the implementation of a unified and balanced state policy that would allow for effective state and social control over the development of the drug situation in the country.
- In April 2006, the «**Programme for combating drug addiction and drug trafficking in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the period 2006-2008³**» was adopted with the aim of creating conditions for halting the growth of drug abuse and illicit trafficking, consistently reducing the spread of drugs to the level of minimum danger to society.
- In May 2009, the «**Programme for combating drug addiction and drug business in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the period 2009-2011⁴**» was approved with the main purpose of implementing measures to block and reverse the development of socially dangerous trends in the growth of addiction to psychoactive substances among the country's population.
- Subsequently, in April 2012, the «**Sectoral programme for the fight against drug addiction and drug trafficking in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the period 2012-2016⁵**» was approved, which consisted of two stages (2012-2014 and 2015-2016) and aimed to improve the emerging system of state and public fight against drug addiction and drug trafficking in the country.

Table 2 below specifies the main goals and approaches of the two main anti-drug strategies that were previously approved by the Government of Kazakhstan.

Table 2. Anti-Drug Strategies 2001-2005 and 2006-2016 in Kazakhstan

Strategy 2001-2005	Strategy 2006-2016
Improving the legislative framework and other legislation to combat drug dependence and drug trafficking and their effective implementation	Strengthening anti-drug campaigns
Building social immunity of the population against drugs and, on this basis, strengthening society in the fight against drug addiction and the drug business.	Increase the effectiveness of prevention measures, early detection, effective treatment and social rehabilitation of drug addicts.

² Decree N° 394 of 2000

³ Decree N° 240 of 2006

⁴ Decree N° 784 of 2009

⁵ Decree N° 451 of 2012

Establish control over the circulation of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, limiting the availability of drugs and preventing them from entering illegal circulation.	Strengthen interdepartmental cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking.
Ensure a joint and balanced effort by all ministries and departments concerned.	Strengthening the material and technical resources of authorised state agencies, as well as medical institutions specialising in the prevention and treatment of drug dependence
Shift the spearhead of criminal repression from the drug users themselves to the active organisers and executors of the drug business.	Modernisation and effective scientific and informational support for the process of reform and development of the drug treatment service
Establish effective cooperation with law enforcement, special and other relevant bodies of the CIS states and other countries	Improvement of the staff training system and educational programmes in the field of narcology.
Attraction of investments, other international technical assistance in the field of the fight against drug addiction and drug trafficking.	Improvement of the legislative framework regulating anti-drug activities, further harmonisation of republican legislation and police practice aimed at combating drug addiction and drug trafficking.

Strategy 2023-2025

The Comprehensive Plan to Combat Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking for the period 2023-2025 in Kazakhstan is still in parliamentary procedure for final approval by the country's general courts. The Plan is composed of a total of 77 actions and **provides an accurate overview of the goals and priorities of the Kazakh government in its fight against substance abuse and drug trafficking.** Table 3 below provides a detailed overview of the organisational structure that encompasses the various actions envisaged in the Plan.

Table 3. Anti-Drug Strategy 2023-2025 in Kazakhstan

Comprehensive plan to combat drug dependence and drug trafficking for the period 2023-2025
Analysis of the drug situation and drug development trends
Improving the legislative and regulatory framework
Increasing the effectiveness of the fight against the new challenges and threats of the modern drug trade
Improvement of the system of prevention, treatment of drug addiction and development of the system of rehabilitation of drug addicts.
Ensuring state control over the legal movement of drugs and precursors
Strengthening and expanding international cooperation

In this regard, it is important to highlight the following key elements of the measures envisaged in the Plan for the period 2023-2025:

- Strong commitment on the part of government authorities to **effectively address the new risks present in the drug market** in the country.
- Responsibility for **improving the preventive system** in relation to drug use.
- Conducting **comprehensive analyses to understand the drug situation** in the country and to be able to implement measures in line with the current situation.
- A firm commitment to **continue to collaborate internationally with various organisations** in order to make progress in tackling the drug phenomenon.

2.3 Drug situation in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan, a nation located in the Central Asian region, faces a complex drug-related reality. As part of international drug trafficking routes, the country is affected by the challenges associated with the transit and consumption of illicit substances. Aware of the risks this poses to society and national security, the Kazakh government is working hard to address this issue and protect the welfare of its citizens. Tackling the drug problem has become a priority on Kazakhstan's agenda, seeking to promote a drug-free society by strengthening its control and prevention mechanisms.

Key factors in the current drug situation in Kazakhstan

In the context of Kazakhstan, the following factors are identified as influencing the drug situation in the country.

- **The movement of drugs from Afghanistan takes place via the so-called «Northern Route».**
- The problem of drug use is **mainly characterised by IDU.**
- The **infection through unsafe drug use practices** remains a matter of the utmost urgency.
- The problematic substance use has been **influenced by the use of home-made preparations of codeine medicines** and the use of edible opium poppy and tropicamide.
- The **market for NPS has developed rapidly** in recent years.

Current measures to combat drug trafficking in Kazakhstan

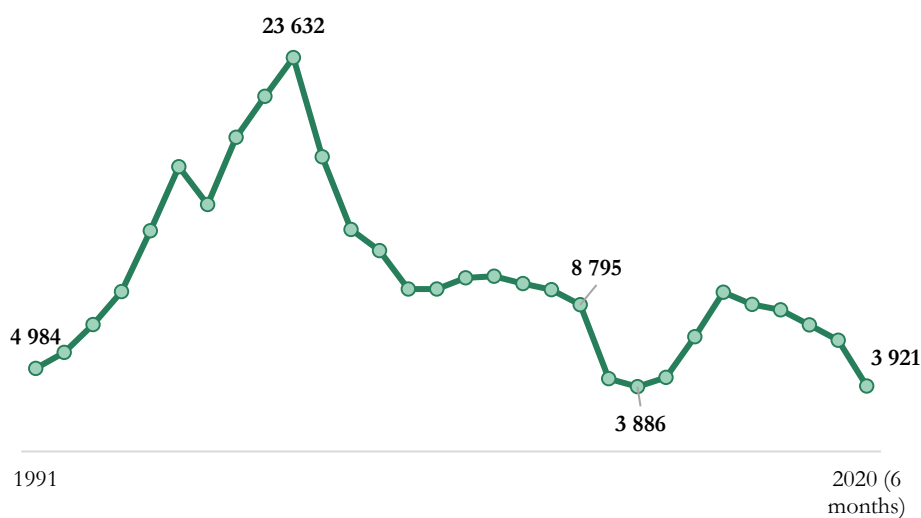
The government of Kazakhstan is currently promoting the following measures to combat drug trafficking in the country:

- Strengthen and broaden **international cooperation.**
- Improve the **legal and regulatory framework.**
- **Optimise the system of incentives** for people who help in the fight against illegal drug trafficking.
- **Implement preventive measures** in school settings.
- **Raise awareness through publicity measures** about the legal consequences of participating in drug trafficking.

Drug-related crime in Kazakhstan

In this section, we turn our attention to drug-related crime in Kazakhstan, with the aim of exploring the current drug-related crime landscape. The country faces drug-related challenges and understanding the nature of drug-related crime is crucial to developing effective strategies. Let us now examine the current drug-related crime situation in detail, with an emphasis on the trends observed and the most prevalent types of crime. This analysis will allow us to gain a comprehensive overview of the problem and provide a basis for addressing it more effectively in the specific context of Kazakhstan. Graphic 1 below analyses trends in drug-related crime in Kazakhstan over a period from 1991 to the first 6 months of 2020.

Graphic 1. National register of drug-related crime



On closer examination, a number of significant points stand out:

- **There was a significant increase in drug-related crime in the 1990s, peaking in 2000 with 23,632 recorded cases.**
- **Since 2001, there has been a downward trend in drug-related crime in Kazakhstan, with a steady decrease until 2012. However, an increase is recorded in 2013 and 2014, followed by a gradual decline.**
- **In 2020, 3,921 cases of drug-related crime were recorded** in the first six months of the year.
- These fluctuations in drug-related crime can be the result of a number of factors, such as **changes in drug policy, law enforcement measures, socio-economic changes and changes in drug use patterns.**

Table 4. Drug-related crime statistics in Kazakhstan (2017-2021)

Drug-related offences	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Variation % Change (2017-2021)
Misdemeanours	5,150	5,378	4,674	5,291	4,541	-11.6
Crimes	3,340	2,457	2,342	2,517	2,746	-17.7
Drug revenue laundering	6	4	2	2	2	-66.7
Drug smuggling	307	367	330	144	180	-41.3
Illicit circulation without intent to sell	5,779	5,752	5,023	5,638	4,945	-14.4
Unlawful handling with intent to sell	2,000	1,389	1,370	1,544	1,698	-15.1
Theft or extortion of drugs	3	1	1	0	0	-100
Inclination towards drug use	5	8	3	7	7	+40
Illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotic substances	246	211	225	276	238	-3.3
Illicit turnover of toxic substances, substances, tools, or equipment used for production and processing of drugs	9	6	8	4	4	-55.6
Organisation and maintenance of brothels for the consumption of drugs	74	55	17	7	8	-89.9
Violation of the rules for handling narcotic substances	39	29	29	16	19	-51.3
Total	16,958	15,657	14,024	15,446	14,388	-15.1

Source: UNODC (2022)

Table 4 shows the main trends in drug-related crime during the period under review. The key trends and highlights to note are presented below:

- **Drug-related offences have seen** an overall decrease over the five-year period, with **a negative change of 15.1% in total offences** (from 16,958 in 2017 to 14,388 in 2021). However, **a considerable increase of 40% has been observed in the inclination towards drug use**, although the absolute values are not statistically significant.

- In the category of **misdemeanours and drug-related crimes**, a decrease of **11.6%** and **17.7%** respectively has been observed from 2017 to 2021.
- Other crimes, such as **unlawful handling with intent to sell and illicit turnover of toxic substances**, have seen decreases of **15.1%** and **55.6%** respectively.
- **Drug revenue laundering** has seen a **drastic decrease of 66.7%**, while **drug smuggling** has seen a decrease of **41.3%**.

Main drugs seized in Kazakhstan

In this section, we focus on analysing in detail the main drugs seized in Kazakhstan, examining the substances that have been seized in the country. Through a thorough study, we explore the most frequently seized drugs on Kazakh territory and the trends associated with them. This analysis provides us with a more accurate understanding of the extent of the drug problem in the country.

Table 5. Seizures of different drugs and psychotropic substances in kilograms in Kazakhstan (2017-2021)

Types of drugs	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Variation % Change (2017 -2021)
Heroin	146.88	58.61	1,151.99	70.09	76.58	-47.86
Opium	95.02	6.96	0.78	0.058	52.90	-44.33
Morphine	0.00015	0.00006	0.0080	- ⁶	-	-
Morphine	0.00005	0.00015	0.00018	0.00021	0.077	+153,900
Poppy straw	2.50	3.80	36.35	30.62	20.46	+718.4
Opium poppy	22.38	12.06	1.07	2.27	3.95	-82.35
Extracted opium	0.151	0.0019	0.0046	0.227	0.094	-37.39
Acetylated opium	0.021	0.016	0.026	0.008	0.0021	-90
Fentanyl	-	0.003	0.0041	0.00046	-	-
Marijuana	34,107.55	17,069.74	9,690.50	8,226.52	11,487.33	-66.36
Cannabis plants	5,456.64	2,319.90	12,777.74	9,380.41	3,165.21	-42.03
Hashish	790.76	838.89	708.78	580.30	1,033.21	+30.66
Cannabis resin	1.82	0.45	0.22	1.66	29.64	+1,524.18

⁶ Hereafter, the symbol «-» indicates that no data has been recorded.

Cannabis oil	0.0174	0.04	0.217	0.00113	0.0376	+115.91
Tetrahydrocannabinol	0.00216	0.0048	0.0069	0.0067	0.033	+1,427.78
Cocaine salts	0.087	0.133	0.446	-	0.111	+27.59
Cocaine hydrochloride	0.388	0.039	0.721	0.157	-	-59.62⁷
Amphetamine	0.0045	0.079	-	0.0035	0.032	+611.11
Methamphetamine	0.00098	0.0026	0.00044	-	-	-
MDMA	0.0019	0.0025	0.0019	0.31	0.019	+900
Pyrovalerone	0.0012	0.0015	0.0029	0.112	0.0007	-41.67
Alpha-PVP	n/a ⁸	n/a	0.494	0.028	0.026	-94.73⁹
Methcathinone	0.027	0.302	0.0012	0.057	0.092	+240.74
Other cathinone	n/a	n/a	0.0037	0.258	n/a	-
TOTAL	40,467	20,357	25,380	18,878	19,543	-51.71

Source: UNODC (2022)

Table 5 shows seizures by kilograms of different drugs and psychotropic substances between 2017 and 2021 in Kazakhstan. The most relevant aspects and trends observed in these data are discussed below:

- **Opium poppy shows a negative percentage change of 82.35%.** The quantities seized are relatively low in all years recorded, with the largest quantity being 22.38 kilograms in 2017.
- **Poppy straw shows a positive percentage change of 718.4% between 2017 and 2021.** In 2019, the highest quantity seized was recorded at 36.35 kilograms, followed by 30.62 kilograms in 2020.
- **Despite the negative percentage change of 44.33% for opium, the quantities of opium seized are relatively low in all recorded years.** The largest quantity seized was 95.02 kg in 2017.
- **The percentage change in heroin seizures between 2017 and 2020 is -47.86%.** It is relevant to note that significant quantities have been seized in the years 2017 and 2019, with 146.88 and 1,151.99 kilograms, respectively.
- Although there has been **a considerable decrease in the quantities of marijuana seized over the years, it is still the drug with the largest quantities seized.** In 2017, 34,107.55 kilograms were seized, which represents a significant amount compared to other drugs.
- **Seizures of MDMA have been low in previous years, but a significant increase is observed in 2020,** with 0.31 kilograms seized, compared to the other years of the period analysed.

⁷ Percentage change between 2017 and 2020

⁸ Hereafter, the symbol «n/a» indicates that no data are available.

⁹ Percentage change between 2019 and 2021

- The quantities of methamphetamines seized are relatively low in all recorded years, indicating greater difficulties in seizures of methamphetamines by government authorities.

Users in treatment centres in Kazakhstan

In this section, we take a closer look at the issue of users in treatment centres in Kazakhstan, with the aim of examining their situation and the circumstances that lead them to seek help and support in these institutions. By exploring this topic in depth, we gain a broader and more detailed picture of the reality of clients in treatment centres in Kazakhstan.

Table 6. Statistics on people registered in treatment centres and percentage of those who inject drugs in Kazakhstan

Year	Total Users	Percentage of injecting drug users (%)
2016	27,407	63.4
2017	24,883	64.8
2018	22,748	65
2019	22,003	65
2020	20,259	65

Source: UNODC (2022)

- Between 2016 and 2020, there is a steady decrease in the number of drug users registered in treatment centres in Kazakhstan. The number has decreased from 27,407 in 2016 to 20,259 in 2020, a negative percentage decrease of 26%.
- However, despite the decrease in the total number of drug users, the percentage of those who inject drugs has remained constant at 65% over the period analysed.
- The persistence of a high percentage of drug users who inject is a major challenge in terms of drug policy and public health. Injecting drug use is associated with an increased risk of transmission of infectious diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis C, as well as serious health complications.

HIV status in Kazakhstan

In this section, we take a closer look at the HIV situation in Kazakhstan, approaching the issue from a variety of perspectives. HIV remains a significant public health challenge in Kazakhstan, and a thorough understanding of the current situation is essential to implement effective prevention, diagnosis and treatment strategies. Through this analysis, we gain a comprehensive and complete picture of the HIV situation in Kazakhstan, allowing us to accurately identify the priority areas of intervention needed to control the spread of the disease and improve the quality of life of those affected.

Table 7. Trends and changes in HIV testing and cases by sex in Kazakhstan (2016-2020)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Variation % Change (2016-2020)
People tested for HIV	2,831,554	2,953,915	2,956,175	3,069,199	3,052,697	+7.81
New HIV Cases	2,725	2,856	3,218	3,518	3,342	+22.67
Male	1,575	1,730	1,921	2,303	n/a	+46.19¹⁰
Female	1,148	1,126	1,179	1,215	n/a	+5.83
IDUs (%)	30.9	29.2	28.3	32.6	n/a	+5.5
Sexual contacts (%)	64.5	62.0	68.5	62.7	n/a	-2.79
PLWH	19,113	20,841	22,712	25,753	27,498	+43.82

Source: UNODC (2022)

- **The number of people tested for HIV has seen a steady increase over the years, from 2,831,554 in 2016 to 3,052,697 in 2020. This represents a positive change of 7.81% over the five-year period.**
- **The number of new HIV cases has also increased significantly, from 2,725 in 2016 to 3,342 in 2020, representing an increase of 22.67%.**
- **A breakdown by gender shows that the number of men diagnosed with HIV has increased significantly, with a positive variation of 46.19% between 2016 and 2019. On the other hand, the number of women diagnosed has shown a more moderate growth, with a positive variation of 5.83% in the same period.**
- **In terms of IDU, there have been fluctuations in the percentage of cases related to this group. In 2016, 30.9% of HIV cases were associated with IDUs, while in 2019 this percentage increased to 32.6%.**
- **In terms of HIV transmission routes, there is a decrease in the percentage of cases attributed to sexual contact, from 64.5% in 2016 to 62.7% in 2019.**
- **The total number of PLWH has seen a significant increase over the five-year period, from 19,113 in 2016 to 27,498 in 2020, representing a positive change of 43.82%.**

¹⁰ In Table 7, if «n/a» is displayed, the percentage change between 2016 and 2020 is calculated.

3. National Drug Policy Dialogue in Kazakhstan

3.1 Stakeholders involved in the National Drug Policy Dialogue

The 7th of June 2023 marked a significant milestone in Kazakhstan, where the National Drug Policy Dialogue was held in the framework of the CADAP 7 Programme. In the city of Astana, leaders, and decision-makers as well as representatives of international organisations and non-governmental organisations gathered to exchange ideas and reflections on how to address the challenges posed by narcotic substances in the country.

The event was attended by representatives of the Government of Kazakhstan, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Higher Education, the General Prosecutor's Office and the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Mental Health, as well as representatives of the Public Fund COU KZ. Also present were the delegation of the EU in Kazakhstan, representatives of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, representatives of BOMCA and the Embassy of the United States of America in Kazakhstan.

Table 8 shows in detail all the institutions who attended the National Drug Policy Dialogue in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Table 8. Attendees at the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Kazakhstan

	Institution
European Union	Delegation of the EU to Kazakhstan
	FIIAPP
Republic of Kazakhstan	MIA
	MFA
	MJ
	Office of the General Prosecutor
	MH
	RSPCMH
	Ministry of Higher Education
	National Centre on Human Rights
	Association of Schools of Social Work & National Alliance of Professional Social Workers
	Public Fund COU KZ

International allies	BOMCA
	US Embassy in Astana
	OSCE Programme Office in Astana
	UNODC

During the development of the event, we had the participation of experts in the field of drug policy. Among the distinguished guests were distinguished professionals such as PhD. David Pere Martínez Oró and PhD. Ricard Faura, who are members of the organisation Episteme Social, as well as Mr. Roger Cáceres. In addition, PhD. Viktor Mravčík, representative of the organisation Podané Ruce, was also present.

3.2 Main issues emerging

In the following, the central issues addressed during the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Kazakhstan will be presented. It will provide an overview of the issues raised, as well as the various options and suggestions for their resolution, which were discussed at the event.

1. The **importance of cooperation between Central Asia and the EU** is highlighted, as well as the key role of programmes such as CADAP in the context of international development over the years.
2. It highlights the **support of the Government of Kazakhstan in the implementation of international development programmes** and pays great attention to the importance of the fight against drugs.
3. The **implementation of a series of legislative amendments aimed at responding more effectively** and in anticipation of the challenges and threats posed by the increasing spread of synthetic psychoactive substances.
4. The **importance of harmonisation of national drug legislation with international standards** is evident.
5. It emphasises that the **fight against drug addiction and drug trafficking are priorities in both Kazakhstan's domestic and foreign policy**, underlining the country's commitment to address these problems in a comprehensive and collaborative manner at the national and international level.

3.3 Analysis of concerns emerging from the National Dialogue

In this section, a comprehensive analysis of the findings related to the drug policy situation in Kazakhstan and the phenomena arising from it is presented. The main objective of this analysis is to understand the current situation in the country and to assess the progress made in key areas. It identifies both achievements and remaining challenges in order to provide a solid basis for the formulation of effective strategies and policies that will further Kazakhstan's development and well-being. It should be noted that the analysis has been carried out exclusively on the basis of the National Dialogue and documents provided by the consulted governmental parties.

- **Emergence of New Psychoactive Substances.** The emergence of NPS in a previously unexplored market has been a phenomenon of increasing relevance in recent years in Kazakhstan. This phenomenon has been driven by the advancement of technologies and globalisation, which has facilitated the rapid dissemination of information and mass production of these substances and thus the shift in consumption. As a result, the country's drug market is undergoing rapid evolution and diversification, presenting new challenges for the authorities in charge of regulating and controlling these substances. The findings highlight the need to effectively address this ever-changing phenomenon through strategies tailored to the particularities of these NPS.
- **Decline in drug-related crime.** Available data reveal a sustained reduction in the incidence of criminal cases in recent years, which could indicate a possible decrease in criminal activity associated with drugs and other crimes. Also, regarding the illegal trafficking of substances, all signs point to Kazakhstan achieving more efficient control of drug smuggling activities year after year. In this sense, the findings show that the policies and strategies implemented by the country's governmental authorities are having a positive impact on the reduction of drug-related crime.
- **Positive and negative variations in seizures of illicit substances.** While a significant decrease in total seizures of the various psychoactive substances analysed has been observed, an increase in seizures of synthetic drugs. The problem in terms of volume is most evident in seizures of marijuana and cannabis plants, however, it is clear that these have been significantly reduced from 2017 to 2020. Both positive and negative variations in seizures of illicit substances may be the result of a combination of factors related to law enforcement action, adaptation of criminal networks and socio-economic factors.
- **Decrease in the number of people registered in treatment centres.** A decline in the number of people registered in drug treatment centres has been observed. This trend raises questions about the possible causes and its implications for the fight against addiction in the country. While it is encouraging that the number of people seeking treatment has decreased, it is important to look closely at the reasons behind this decline.
- **Increase in new HIV cases in the country.** In the period 2016-2020, Kazakhstan has experienced an increase in new HIV cases. This trend is of concern to authorities and health professionals alike, as it poses a significant challenge to HIV prevention and control. Over the years, a steady increase in HIV incidence has been observed in the country, underlining the need for a stronger and more efficient response by health systems and public policies.
- **Availability of raw materials for the illicit manufacture of drugs.** The country is strategically located in a region bordering important drug trafficking corridors, which facilitates access to chemical substances and plants used in the manufacture of narcotics. It also has favourable climatic conditions for the cultivation of drugs such as marijuana. This availability of raw materials represents a significant challenge for the Kazakh authorities in their fight against drug trafficking. The existence of a domestic supply base contributes to the increased production and distribution of illicit drugs in the country, further exacerbating the situation.

4. What do the interviews and the questionnaire tell us?

4.1 Analysis of the interviews

In this section, we explore in detail the interviews conducted to capture and understand the different perspectives expressed by participants. Through these valuable conversations, we have had the unique opportunity to **immerse ourselves in the experiences, opinions and knowledge of key individuals related to drug policy in Kazakhstan.**

Each interview has been meticulously conducted, creating a safe and welcoming environment that allows participants to share their thoughts and reflections. We have gathered a wide range of voices, spanning diverse profiles, backgrounds and points of view, which **has provided us with a comprehensive and enriching view of the topic in question.**

Our main objective is to **draw meaningful and relevant conclusions from these testimonies** to gain a deeper understanding of the current drug situation in the country. In the following, we present the most salient aspects that we have obtained from the interviews conducted.

Positive aspects of drug policy highlighted in the interviews

- **Good coordination with international organisations** is highlighted, allowing best practices to be shared and drug-related crimes on the Internet to be tackled effectively.
- **The bureaucratic process for listing any type of drug as a dangerous substance has been improved** from being done by presidential decree to being done by the government itself, which has significantly reduced the administrative time required.
- **The importance of free medical care and treatment in the rehabilitation process** for people who have used drugs over time is highlighted and emphasised.

Drug-related challenges highlighted in the interviews

- There has been a **significant increase in the use of synthetic drugs, and there is a lack of an adequate methodology and algorithm for recording** these substances, which makes it difficult to identify and analyse them.
- It highlights the **increase in local production of synthetic drugs and the growing distribution via the Internet**, which poses significant difficulties in identifying the owners of websites promoting the sale of these substances.
- **The lack of collaboration between the governmental, private, and civil society sectors**, as well as the lack of partnership and cooperation between these parties, is highlighted as an obstacle to prevention and social support for the families of drug users.
- The **lack of control, methodology and adequate registration in private centres** that provide psychological help and treatment to people who use drugs is highlighted.

4.2 Analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire

In this section, a thorough analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire designed for the second stage of Outcome 1: Drug policies of the CADAP 7 Programme is carried out. The main objective of this questionnaire is to **collect accurate and relevant information on the needs and demands related to drug policies in the country.**

Through this analysis, together with the review of interviews and documentation provided by counterparts in Kazakhstan, the **aim is to establish preliminary recommendations useful for government authorities.** By combining these methodologies, the aim is to **obtain a comprehensive and contextualised view of the current needs and challenges** in the field of drug policy in Kazakhstan.

- **Different assessment of the importance of demand and supply reduction and harm reduction.** It can be observed that there is a majority consensus on drug demand and supply reduction as priority approaches for the country's drug policies. Reducing the harms associated with drug use is also considered relevant, although to a lesser extent than the other two options.
- **Inclusion of harm reduction as an integral part of drug policy.** Most respondents consider the inclusion of harm reduction as fairly important for the country's drug policy, while others consider it to be of little relevance. This suggests that there may still be some discrepancy or lack of clarity about the importance and benefits of harm reduction in the Kazakh context.
- **Importance of a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to treatment for people who use drugs.** The importance of providing specialised medical and psychological treatment is highlighted, as well as implementing harm reduction programmes to minimise the risks associated with drug use. Some respondents also mentioned the relevance of decriminalising drug use, promoting the social and occupational reintegration of people who use drugs, and providing support and resources to affected families and communities. This indicates that there is recognition of the need for a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to tackling drug use and its consequences.
- **Rehabilitation and social reintegration of people with addiction problems.** Respondents consider a variety of options relevant, such as support programmes for job search and vocational training, access to social and work reintegration support programmes, and education and training programmes for relapse prevention. Inter-institutional coordination for the comprehensive care of the person undergoing rehabilitation, as well as specialised treatment programmes, are also valued.
- **Significant concern about the use of non-prescription medicines containing psychotropic substances.** It is considered a relevant problem in Kazakhstan, mainly due to insufficient control over the dispensing and sale of these medicines, as well as uncontrolled use that can lead to abuse. In this case, government authorities have implemented various actions to address this situation, such as regulating the sale of medicines without prescription, imposing sanctions on non-compliant pharmacies, conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the risks associated with the use of such medicines, and improving the monitoring and control of their sale.
- **Consideration of alcohol consumption as a problematic phenomenon in the country because of its adverse consequences.** It is considered to be a rather important problem in Kazakhstan's

society. Several reasons were mentioned for this, such as the negative impact on health, the high number of people with alcohol problems and the increase of alcohol-related crimes.

- **Significant concern about HIV among the drug using population in Kazakhstan.** All respondents indicate that it is an important and urgent concern. This indicates that there is an explicit recognition of the importance of addressing HIV in this particular population. In this regard, some responses were highlighted by respondents, such as the need to improve access to specialised HIV care services for people who use drugs, as well as to increase the availability of HIV testing and promote regular testing among this population group.
- **Actions implemented in the country to address the stigma associated with drug addiction.** Several initiatives implemented in Kazakhstan to reduce stigma were mentioned, such as programmes in different regions of the country, the existence of legislation and work done on reducing stigma and discrimination of drug addicts in the framework of harm reduction programmes.
- **Identification of factors contributing to illicit drug trafficking in Kazakhstan.** Factors such as the use of information and communication technologies, social networks and messaging apps, the geographical location of the country and its role as a transit hub for drugs to other countries, the influence of criminal groups and criminal organisations, and corruption in law enforcement and security forces are the main factors identified by respondents.
- **Main weaknesses in the anti-drug strategy identified by respondents.** The lack of financial and material resources to implement effective drug use prevention and treatment programmes, weak institutional capacity to address the problem of NPS and the absence of specific policies and programmes to address drug use among vulnerable population groups are emphasised as key weaknesses in Kazakhstan's anti-drug strategy.
- **Weaknesses identified by respondents in legislation related to the drug phenomenon.** The lack of investment in education and public awareness programmes on drug use and associated risks, as well as the absence of effective preventive measures to reduce drug demand, are highlighted as the main weaknesses identified in Kazakhstan's anti-drug legislation.
- **Importance of civil society participation in drug policy formulation and implementation.** Respondents highlighted the importance and necessity of civil society participation. Various forms of participation were mentioned, such as the creation of spaces for dialogue and collaboration between civil society and responsible government authorities, the inclusion of representative civil society groups in committees and working groups, the use of online platforms to collect and share information, and the conduct of public consultations and surveys.

5. Conclusions

- **A shift in the pattern of drug use from escapist to recreational drug use.** In Kazakhstan, a new and noticeable pattern of drug use has emerged in recent years. A shift may be gradually taking place, characterised by a significant transition from the use of highly problematic substances, mainly opiates such as heroin, towards more recreational and leisure-related drug use. While these uses also carry significant risks, their impacts are often much less in terms of physical and social health and are associated with a lower burden of social stigma. This shift has been driven by a growing interest in more fun and pleasurable experiences, following a pattern similar to that observed in EU countries from the 1990s onwards and which has been consolidating over the first two decades of the 21st century in Kazakhstan.
- **Differentiated responses to the two consumption patterns in the country.** Given the two patterns of drug use identified in the country - one more traditional, linked mainly to the use of opium derivatives, and the other more contemporary, linked to the use of synthetic substances and NPS - it is imperative to apply tailored and specific responses. Traditional drug use requires an approach focused on health and wellbeing, with an emphasis on harm reduction and access to health care services. Synthetics use, on the other hand, requires a combination of prevention and risk reduction. Both responses must also address the underlying factors that lead to the use of these substances.
- **Diversification of the drug market in Kazakhstan.** The shift towards synthetic drug use is evidence of a significant transformation in the country's drug market, with the emergence of synthetic substances and a diversity of NPS. This evolution raises the urgent need to implement new strategies and responses to tackle this type of use. A good understanding of this phenomenon and an effective response to this transformation in the drug market becomes essential to ensure the protection of the health and well-being of the population and to promote a safe and healthy environment in Kazakh society.
- **Changing patterns of use and profile of users.** The use of synthetic drugs may be appealing to a different group of users than heroin, increasing the likelihood that young people and those seeking different recreational experiences will become involved in their use. This reality emphasises the need to understand more precisely the motivations and needs of this specific group in order to implement more targeted and effective prevention and education strategies.
- **Kazakhstan's geographical location continues to present significant challenges in the fight against drug trafficking, especially opium derivatives.** Opium production in Afghanistan has not ceased in recent years, and both Kazakhstan in particular and the Central Asian region as a whole are on transit routes used for the distribution of drugs to European countries, Asian countries and other regions of the Global North. Despite changes in consumption patterns among the local population, the problem of opiate and heroin trafficking is likely to remain relevant in Kazakhstan due to its role as a transit point on international routes.
- **HIV infection through unsafe drug use practices.** These cases of HIV transmission are a reminder of the importance of adopting preventive approaches and encouraging individual responsibility in making healthy choices. Through a greater understanding of the factors that

contribute to the spread of HIV and by fostering empathy and support for those affected, we can move towards a more aware and caring society. By combining prevention efforts, support and understanding, we can effectively address this issue and work towards reducing HIV incidence in Kazakhstan.

- **Trends and variations in drug-related crime in Kazakhstan.** Significant decreases have been observed in a number of drug-related aspects in Kazakhstan. A marked reduction is observed in the theft or extortion of drugs (-100%), as well as in the organisation of drug brothels (-89.9%) and money laundering related to drug trafficking (-66.7%). In addition, significant decreases have been observed in the illegal trade in toxic substances and related tools (-55.6%), violations of regulations in the handling of narcotic substances (-15.1%), and drug smuggling (-41.3%). Although to a lesser extent, slight reductions have also been recorded in other drug-related crimes. On the other hand, a moderate increase in the inclination towards drug use (+40%) has been observed. These data reflect significant changes in a number of drug-related areas, underlining the importance of continuing to address these challenges in society.
- **Trends and variations in seizures of drugs and psychotropic substances in Kazakhstan.** During the period from 2017 to 2021, significant variations in seizures of drugs and psychotropic substances in Kazakhstan have been observed in the country. These seizures can be classified into three main categories, depending on the percentage increase or decrease. First, seizures with significant increases such as morphine (+153,900%), cannabis resin (+1,524%) and Tetrahydrocannabinol (+1,427%), MDMA (+900%), poppy straw (+718%) and amphetamines (+611%). In second place are seizures that showed a notable increase, such as methcathinone (+240%) and cannabis oil (+115%). Finally, seizures that decreased in intensity are identified as Alpha-PVP (-94%), acetylated opium (-90%), opium poppy (-82%), marijuana (-66%) and heroin (-47%). These seizures reflect the picture of drug trafficking and consumption in Kazakhstan during the period mentioned above, reflecting fluctuations in the availability of and demand for various substances in the country.
- **Trends and variations in HIV testing and cases by sex in Kazakhstan.** During the time span from 2016 to 2020, significant changes and variations in HIV cases by gender have been evident in Kazakhstan. Importantly, over the past five years there has been a notable 46% increase in new HIV diagnoses in men, and an increase in the number of PWID, with an increase of more than 5%. In addition, there has been a 22% increase in new HIV cases and a 43% increase in the number of PLWH. These findings reflect the HIV situation in Kazakhstan during the reporting period, underscoring the need to continue implementing prevention and treatment measures to effectively address this challenge.

6. Reflections as preliminary recommendations

This section focuses on addressing the emerging challenges facing Kazakhstan in relation to psychoactive substance use. Located in Central Asia, Kazakhstan is immersed in a constantly changing environment, which implies the need to review and adapt its existing drug policies. The shift towards recreational and synthetic drug use poses a number of additional challenges and risks that require an effective response. The following are generic recommendations to address these challenges and promote a comprehensive and balanced approach to drug policy in Kazakhstan.

It is important to note at this point that these recommendations are presented here only in a preliminary way, as they will be expanded and detailed at a later stage, once the «Regional Seminar on Building and Strengthening Balanced and Evidence-Based Drug Policies» has taken place. This seminar will specifically analyse what concrete actions implemented by EU Member States can be useful for Kazakh institutions in this regard.

- **Aligning new anti-drug strategies with new emerging patterns of drug use**, so that the challenges and changes in the field of drugs in Kazakh society can be efficiently addressed.
- **Address new channels of drug purchase through cyber-security measures**, thus ensuring the protection of society and the integrity of internet users from this emerging threat.
- **Tackling the underlying causes of drug use in a comprehensive way**, focusing on social, psychological and environmental aspects.
- **Improve and strengthen prevention measures** to avoid HIV transmission.
- **Intensify efforts to educate and raise awareness of the risks associated with unsafe consumption practices, while** promoting access to information and resources for adequate protection.
- **Promote greater efforts to combat stigma and discrimination** against people with addiction problems.
- **Prioritise and strengthen rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes** in order to provide comprehensive and sustained support to individuals struggling with addiction, enabling them to recover effectively, reintegrate positively into society and build a full and drug-free life.
- **Conduct research and evaluation** of policies and programmes implemented.

7. Documentation consulted

7.1 Documentation used for the Systematisation Report

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Systematisation Report of the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Kyrgyzstan

CADAP 7 – Component 1: Drug Policy



1. Introduction

This Systematisation Report of the «National Dialogue on Drug Policy» meeting presents an analysis of the background, the main findings and some preliminary conclusions and recommendations on drug policy in the Kyrgyz Republic. The whole of the analysis systematised here is based on active participation in the National Dialogue, together with an in-depth analysis of the available documentation and reinforced by a questionnaire and a series of individual in-depth interviews conducted afterwards with some of the people who attended the National Dialogue. More specifically, the sources of analysis for this analysis are, briefly presented, the following.

- **Available documentation on drug policy in Kyrgyzstan.** Ten documents covering legal-normative and analytical issues of the drug situation in the country have been analysed.
- **«National Dialogue on Drug Policy»**, which was attended by twenty-eight people from different ministries of the Kyrgyz Republic, Non-Governmental Organisations, representatives of the EU and International Organisations, as well as FIIAPP and CADAP.
- **Semi-structured in-depth interviews.** To complement and deepen some of the issues raised in the National Dialogue, interviews were conducted with four of the people who had attended the meeting during the months of May and June 2023.
- **Needs assessment questionnaire**, which was sent to all institutions represented in the National Dialogue and was answered by seventeen representatives of these institutions during the months of May and June 2023.

Episteme Social therefore conceived the National Dialogue as an opportunity to conduct a **comprehensive assessment of Kyrgyzstan's drug policy needs** according to the different actors involved. The final objective of these actions is to provide a **needs analysis**, which is reflected in this Systematisation Report.

In terms of the structure of this Systematisation Report, we first present **an analysis of the existing drug policy literature in Kyrgyzstan**, introducing the legal background on which these policies are based. This is followed by a presentation of **the «National Drug Policy Dialogue» and the main issues raised**. We continue with an **analysis of the semi-structured in-depth interviews** conducted with some of the people who attended the National Dialogue. We end the analysis with a presentation of **the most salient elements of the needs assessment questionnaire** sent to all the institutions present at the National Dialogue. Once this disaggregated analysis has been carried out, **a series of conclusions are presented, accompanied by some reflections that give rise to some initial preliminary recommendations.**

2. Analysis of documentation

In this section of «Analysis of documentation», we explore the state of drug legislation in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the programmes implemented by government authorities. In addition, we carry out an analysis of the current drug situation in the country in order to obtain a more accurate and up-to-date picture of the drug problem.

2.1 Drug legislation in Kyrgyzstan

International legal instruments

Table 9 presents the drug-related treaties to which Kyrgyzstan has acceded. These treaties reflect Kyrgyzstan's strong commitment to combating drug-related problems by establishing an internationally recognised legal and policy framework to address this global challenge.

Table 9. Ratification of drug-related international treaties in Kyrgyzstan¹¹

Treaty	State
Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961	7 October 1994 (Ratification)
Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971	7 October 1994 (Accession)
United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988	7 October 1994 (Accession)

National legal instruments¹²

During the last few years, the Kyrgyz Republic **has undertaken a major judicial and law enforcement reform with the aim of improving its legislation.** To achieve this, a special working group was formed, bringing together the best representatives of judicial practice, legal science, representatives of the non-governmental sector and experts from international organisations.

Between 2016 and 2018, this working group almost completely revised the current criminal, procedural, executive, etc. legislation. As a result, new legal codes and instruments were adopted and **are expected to have a significant impact on improving justice and strengthening the rule of law in the Kyrgyz Republic.** Some of the changes introduced in drug legislation in the country are specified below.

- **Decriminalisation of minor offences** relating to the circulation of narcotics and consumption of substances in public places.
- **Exemption from criminal liability** for persons who voluntarily turn themselves in and contribute to the disclosure of offences related to illegal drug trafficking.

¹¹ UNODC, 2022

¹² Internal document from CADAP 7 Kyrgyzstan

- **Criminalisation of the illegal trafficking and processing of narcotic drugs, as well as smuggling of substances and embezzlement or extortion of narcotic drugs.**

2.2 Drug policies in Kyrgyzstan

Strategies implemented

Since 1993, Kyrgyzstan has regularly developed drug-related strategic documents, addressing, and detailing the challenge of addictive substances, setting clear goals and proposing measures to achieve them.

- In January 2014, the «**Anti-Drug Programme of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2014-2019**» was adopted, which was notable for comprehensively addressing the country's previous priorities, with a strong emphasis on the implementation of innovative approaches.

Table 10 below details the key objectives and approaches of the previous anti-drug strategy adopted by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Table 10. Anti-Drug Programme 2014-2019 in Kyrgyzstan¹³

Anti-Drug Programme 2014-2019
Strengthening primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of drug dependence
Enhance the competencies of officials responsible for the reduction of illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals
Improving the fight against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors
Improving the control of licit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors
Reduce the level of negative phenomena caused by the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
Ensuring treatment, rehabilitation and access to harm reduction services for drug users in prison
Improving drug control legislation
Developing international coordination and cooperation to tackle drug trafficking
Improving the collection, analysis and evaluation of monitoring information on the drug situation

¹³ Decree N° 54 of 2022

Strategy 2022-2026

The Anti-Drug Programme for the period 2022-2026, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic, demonstrates a comprehensive and strategic approach to the solution of the drug problem in the country. This programme, consisting of a total of 75 actions, **provides a precise overview of the goals and priorities of the Kyrgyz government in its fight against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking.**

Table 11 below shows the organisational structure in which the actions contemplated in the Anti-Drugs Programme are included.

Table 11. Anti-Drug Programme 2022-2026 in Kyrgyzstan¹⁴

Anti-Drug Programme 2022-2026	
Fighting illicit drug trafficking	Primary, secondary and tertiary drug use prevention
Analysis and assessment of the drug policy and situation	Preventing HIV, STIs, tuberculosis and hepatitis associated with illicit drug use
Improving the legal framework	Damage reduction in the civil and penitentiary sector
Fighting the raw material of illicit drug trafficking	Ensure availability and access to controlled substances exclusively for medical, veterinary and scientific purposes.
Fighting crime in the field of illicit drug trafficking	Controlling new drug trafficking routes
International cooperation	Border control and customs measures

In this regard, it is important to highlight the following key aspects of the actions included in the Programme for the period 2022-2026:

- Strong commitment **to implement actions based on scientific evidence and international best practices**, adapting them in a manner relevant to the specific country context.
- Conducting **scientific research in the field of drugs in order to understand the situation in this area** and to be able to take the necessary actions accordingly.
- Explicit commitment to establish **prevention and harm reduction as priority directions** to address the drug problem in the country.
- Strong commitment to **improve the drugs field, through a comprehensive approach backed by a series of coordinated and strategic measures.**
- Strengthening **international cooperation in the fight** against drug trafficking.

¹⁴ Decree N° 445 of 2022

2.3 Drug situation in Kyrgyzstan

The fight against illegal drug trafficking is an issue of global concern due to the detrimental effects that drugs can have on health, the economy and social stability. In this regard, the Kyrgyz Republic has been working to strengthen its security and control strategies to combat this scourge.

Key factors in the current drug situation in Kyrgyzstan¹⁵

In the context of Kyrgyzstan, the following factors are identified as influencing the drug situation in the country.

- The **negative social processes that shape and maintain a constant demand** for the illegal transit of drugs.
- **International transit of drugs** through the country's territory.
- The **availability of raw materials** for the illicit manufacture of drugs.
- **Geographical proximity to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**, as the main source of drug production in the region.
- The **activities of international organised crime** in Central Asia.
- The **permeability of state borders**.
- The emergence of **NPS**.
- The **remaining low supply of controlled psychoactive drugs for medical and scientific use**, including for the relief of pain and suffering.

Current measures to combat drug trafficking in Kyrgyzstan¹⁶

The Kyrgyz authorities have implemented a number of measures to address drug-related challenges. Notable actions include the following:

- **Improve the legal and regulatory framework** related to drugs.
- **Strengthen collaboration at the international level**, demonstrating a commitment to promote effective global cooperation in the fight against the drug problem.
- **Strengthen border control through** training of personnel and provision of technologically advanced equipment.
- **Cooperate to reduce the supply of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances**, both of foreign and local origin.

Regional distribution of drug-related crime in Kyrgyzstan

The information provided in the table below presents the numbers of documented crimes in various areas and localities of Kyrgyzstan between January and June 2020 and 2021.

¹⁵ Resolution 445 of 2022.

¹⁶ Resolution 445 of 2022.

Table 12. Comparison of the incidence of drug-related crime by region in Kyrgyzstan in the first six months of 2020 and 2021¹⁷

Regions and ^{oo} cities	Total registered		Percentage change (%)
	6 months 2020	6 months 2021	
Bishkek	136	175	+28.70
Osh	44	67	+52.30
Chui Region	101	102	+1
Issik-Kul region	69	85	+23.30
Naryn Region	2	5	+150
Osh region	30	32	+6.70
Jalal-Abad Region	79	103	+30.40
Talas Region	15	20	+33.30
Batken Region	26	30	+15.40
Total	502	619	+23.31

The data presented in Table 12 allows for a comparison and analysis of the percentage variation between the two periods, **which can help to identify possible trends or changes in the commission of crimes in different geographical areas of the country.**

- In Bishkek, the capital, there is a **28.70% increase in the number of drug-related crime cases.**
- The city of Osh shows a **significant increase of 52.30% in the number of registered cases.**
- Looking at the regions, **the Naryn region stands out with a 150% increase in registered cases.** However, the absolute number of cases is relatively low.
- Other regions, such as Issik-Kul, Jalal-Abad, Talas and Batken, **have also experienced moderate growth in the number of registrations** during the period under review.

Drug-related crime in Kyrgyzstan

Table 13 shows the structure of drug-related crimes that were detected during the period analysed. Through it, trends and changes in the types of offences committed can be observed.

¹⁷ Internal document from CADAP 7 Kyrgyzstan

Table 13. Drug-related offences according to the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic (2017-2021)¹⁸

Type of offence	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% change (2017 - 2021)
Without intent to sell ¹⁹	353	281	418	329	547	+55.3
With intent to sell ²⁰	1,133	1,090	528	413	409	-63.9
Illicit manufacture of precursors (Art. 269)	0	0	14	18	12	-
Smuggling (Art. 270)	18	5	11	12	8	-55.6
Stealing ²¹ (Art. 271)	3	1	2	0	0	-100
Inducement to drug use (Art. 272)	16	2	3	5	2	-87.5
Illicit cultivation ²²	20	21	16	15	6	-70
Violation of rules ²³	1	5	1	1	1	-
Maintenance of dens ²⁴	13	6	6	2	5	-61.5
Illicit drug prescription ²⁵	1	1	0	0	0	-100
Illicit trafficking of strong and poisonous substances (Art. 277)	12	11	0	0	0	-100
Total	1,571	1,424	999	795	990	-36.96

Source: UNODC (2022)

- Overall, **total offences decreased by 36.96% between 2017 and 2021**, with 795 cases in 2021 compared to 1,571 cases in 2017.
- The crime of «**Inducement to drug use**» experienced a significant decrease, **with 87.5% fewer cases in 2021 compared to 2017**.
- The crime of «**Illicit cultivation**» also showed a steady decrease in the years analysed, **with 70% fewer cases in 2021 compared to 2017**.
- The crime type «**Without intent to sell**» had a significant increase in the number of cases, from 353 in 2017 to 547 in 2021, representing **a positive variation of 55.3% in the period from 2017 to 2021**. On the other hand, the crime type «**With intent to sell**» experienced a significant decrease in the number of cases, from 1,133 in 2017 to 409 in 2021. This represents **a negative variation of 63.9% over the same period**.

¹⁸ Criminal Code [CC]. N° 19 of 24th January 2017.

¹⁹ Illegal manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances and their analogues without the purpose of sale (Art. 267).

²⁰ Illegal manufacture of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their analogues for the purpose of sale (Art. 268).

²¹ Theft or extortion of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances (Art. 271).

²² Sowing and cultivation of plants containing narcotic substances (Art. 273).

²³ Infringement of the rules on legal trade in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, their analogues or precursors (Art. 274).

²⁴ Organisation or maintenance of dens for the consumption of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their analogues (Art. 275).

²⁵ Illegal issuing or falsification of prescriptions for narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their analogues (Art. 276).

- It is worth noting that the offences of «Violation of rules» and «Illicit drug prescription» had a low incidence, with only one case recorded in each year analysed.

Main drugs seized in Kyrgyzstan

Table 14 presents data on seizures of illicit drugs, precursors and other substances for the period 2017-2021. This data provides an overview of the amount of drugs seized in each year and allows for an analysis of trends in the fight against drug trafficking.

Table 14. Seizures of illicit drugs, precursors and other substances in kilograms (2017-2021)

Substance	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% change (2017 - 2021)
Heroin	101.33	73.57	53.87	16.49	449.1	+343.2
Opium	33.51	5,42	3.54	9.24	31	-7.47
Poppy straw	-	-	0.15	0.04	n/a	-
Poppy plants	9.09	21.49	0.004	-	0.091	-99
Acetylised opium	n/a	n/a	n/a	0,009	n/a	-
Marijuana	1,052.41	2,332.28	1,140.79	232.28	361.15	-65.68
Hashish	256.72	205.48	169.94	509.96	245.93	-4.21
Cannabis oil	-	-	0.718	2.16	n/a	-
Cannabis plants	10,353.12	10,420.64	14,324.44	1,057.33	516.16	-95.02
Cannabis extract	n/a	-	3.06	747.49	n/a	-
Pharmaceuticals	13.67	0.141	0.075	6.84	0.022	-99.84
Psychotropic substances	0.338	21.072	5.244	6.996	20.42	+5,941.42
Amphetamine	0.0002	-	0.1	0.001	n/a	-
Methamphetamine	-	0.832	-	3.511	n/a	-
Mephedrone	-	-	-	0.01	n/a	-
α-PVP	0.0007	0.0002	1.998	1.844	n/a	+263,328.57²⁶
Total	12,832.33	13,103.85	15,067.78	2,594.81	1,624.86	-87.34

Source: UNODC (2022)

²⁶ Percentage change between 2017 and 2020

- Overall, the total amount of drugs seized showed a decrease of 87.34% over the period analysed, from 12,832.33 kg in 2017 to 1,624.86 kg in 2021.
- During the period under review, a significant increase was observed both in the seizure of α -PVP, from 0.0007 kg in 2017 to 1.844 kg in 2021 (+263,328.57%), and in the seizure of psychotropic substances in general, with a positive variation of 5,941.42%.
- Heroin seizures showed a significant increase over the period analysed, from 101.33 kg in 2017 to 449.1 kg in 2021, representing a positive variation of 343.2%. On the other hand, opium seizures showed an overall decrease, from 33.51 kg in 2017 to 31 kg in 2021, with a negative change of 7.47%.
- Opium poppy cultivation experienced a drastic reduction of 99% between 2017 and 2021, from 9.09 kg to 0.091 kg.
- As for marijuana, a 65.68% decrease in the seizure of this substance is observed, from 1,052.41 kg in 2017 to 361.15 kg in 2021. On the other hand, seizures of cannabis plants also saw a significant reduction of 95.02% in the same period, from 10,353.12 kg to 516.16 kg.

HIV status in Kyrgyzstan

Table 15 reveals trends and variations in HIV testing and cases by sex in the country. These data are of vital importance for understanding the evolution of this disease and possible actions to be taken for its prevention and treatment. Through this table, some significant findings can be highlighted that provide an overview of the HIV situation in Kyrgyzstan over the past few years.

Table 15. Trends and changes in HIV testing and cases by sex in Kyrgyzstan (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% change 2017-2021
Tested for HIV	418,806	411,666	467,200	411,008	541,755	+29.35
New HIV Cases	839	869	843	676	805	-4.05
Male	464	508	450	359	491	+5.81
Female	332	310	337	377	314	-5.42
PWID	202	130	96	44	33	-88.66
Total PLWH	7,948	8,824	9,680	10,342	11,153	+40.32
Male	4,887	5,395	5,849	6,201	6,665	+36.38
Female	2,645	2,957	3,296	3,568	3,870	+46.31
PWID	3,458	3,592	3,686	3,747	3,754	+8.55

Source: UNODC (2022)

- **There is a 29.35% increase in the number of people tested for HIV from 2017 to 2021**, which could indicate increased awareness and access to HIV testing.
- In terms of gender, an **increase of 5.81% in new HIV cases among men is observed** from 2017 to 2021. In contrast, there is a **5.42% decrease in new HIV cases among women** over the same period.
- **Among PWID, a significant decrease of 88.66% in HIV cases** between 2017 and 2021 stands out.
- Overall, an **increase of 40.32% in the total number of PLWH** is observed from 2017 to 2021.
- When analysing PLWH by gender, there is a **36.38% increase in HIV cases among men, and a 46.31% increase among women** from 2017 to 2021.

3. National Dialogue on Drug Policy in Kyrgyzstan

3.1 Stakeholders involved in the National Drug Policy Dialogue

The National Drug Policy Dialogue was an important and momentous event that took place in the city of Bishkek on 28th April 2023. It was attended by the main actors involved in the drug policy decision-making process in the country, as well as representatives of international organisations and non-governmental organisations operating in Kyrgyzstan. The combined attendance of the different actors at the event allowed for a constructive and collaborative dialogue covering a wide range of drug policy issues in the country.

Kyrgyz government representatives present at the event included the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice, as well as representatives of civil society in the country such as the Kyrgyz Ombudsman and the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society. They were joined by the EU delegation to Kyrgyzstan, representatives of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Table below shows in detail all the institutions who attended the National Drug Policy Dialogue in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Table 16. Attendees at the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Kyrgyzstan

	Institution
European Union	Delegation of the EU to the Kyrgyz Republic
	FIIAPP
	SBNON, MIA
	MH
Republic of Kyrgyzstan	RCCBVHH
	RPNC, MH
	SEP, MJ
	RCHPMC
	Institute of Ombudsman
	NGO «Door Eli»
International organisations	CADCA
	UNODC
	OSCE Programme
	UNDP PIU GFATM

The event was also attended by international experts in the field of drug policy, all of them affiliated to the CADAP team. Among the participants were PhD. David Pere Martínez Oró (Episteme Social), PhD. Ricard Faura (Episteme Social), PhD. Aleksandr Zelichenko (Episteme Social), Mr. Roger Cáceres (Episteme Social) and PhD. Viktor Mravčík (Podané Ruce).

3.2 Main issues emerging

The main issues discussed during the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Kyrgyzstan will be presented below. It will provide a detailed description of the issues raised, as well as the various alternatives and proposed solutions that were discussed at the event.

1. The main theme of the debate focused on the **key role that members of parliament play in decision-making** related to drug policy in the country. Participants discussed how parliamentarians should be involved to ensure that decisions are based on scientific evidence and real data, which can help develop more effective and efficient drug policies.
2. Within the discussions at the event, **the topic of the Clean Zone in Kyrgyzstan was also addressed**, generating a great deal of interest among the participants.

During the event, several proposals were put forward to address the problem of the lack of involvement of parliamentarians in evidence-based decision-making. Some of the solutions proposed by the attendees are highlighted below:

- Holding **additional high-level meetings with decision-makers** to provide them with adequate information on drug and HIV issues and to gain their support in the fight against these problems.
- Organisation of a forum with the intention of inviting parliamentarians to listen to drug and HIV issues, **establish effective dialogue and take decisions to directly address the problems and concerns of Kyrgyz society.**
- **Promoting greater debate and consideration of the involvement of parliaments** in the fight against drugs in Central Asia, including the European Parliament.
- **Collecting accurate data on the drug situation in the country to develop effective solutions**, using academic reports as tools to influence policy and budgetary decisions.
- Work with **influential parliamentarians** to bring about meaningful change and emphasise the importance of **communicating issues clearly** and avoiding diversions to irrelevant issues.
- **Engage the executive branch**, especially the Ministries of Interior and Health, to build capacity of other actors and foster more effective collaboration.
- Resume online meetings using platforms such as Zoom and **invite parliamentarians from different countries to share experiences and knowledge.**
- **Engage with the First Lady**, exploring the possibility of making her an ambassador for health and prevention, and liaise with Azerbaijan to seek collaboration on a range of issues, including HIV prevention and health strengthening.

During the discussions on the Clean Zone, several proposals were put forward to facilitate the visit of foreign governmental authorities to these complexes in order to observe the good practices implemented. The proposals that emerged during the event are detailed below:

- **Inspect and share the experience of the Clean Zone** in the women's colony with the women in parliament, emphasising the importance of increased visits and inspections to **provide detailed information, gain a better understanding of their philosophy and the work** done in the Clean Zone.
- Relevance of briefings with parliamentarians and highlighting the **positive influence of journalists and the media** in conveying accurate information and reflecting society's views on the Clean Zone.
- Bringing people from other countries to witness the results and impact of the Clean Zone, highlighting the **importance of showcasing these achievements to decision-makers in this area**.

3.3 Analysis of concerns emerging from the National Dialogue

In this section, a thorough analysis of the findings related to the drug policy situation in Kyrgyzstan and the phenomena stemming from this field is conducted. The main objective of this analysis is to gain an in-depth understanding of the current situation in the country and to assess the progress made in key areas. Through this analysis, it seeks to identify both achievements and remaining challenges, with the aim of establishing a solid basis for the formulation of effective strategies and policies to promote Kyrgyzstan's development and well-being. It is important to note that this analysis has been carried out exclusively using the National Dialogue and documents provided by the consulted government authorities, which ensures a reliable and informed perspective.

- **Emergence of New Psychoactive Substances.** These substances have exploded in Kyrgyzstan in the context of the changing pattern of drug use mentioned above. The rapid evolution and diversification of these substances make them difficult to detect and regulate, which makes the control of their production and distribution even more complex. Authorities are considering how to adapt and constantly update their strategies and policies to address this emerging phenomenon and protect the health and welfare of the population.
- **Low supply of controlled psychoactive drugs for medical and scientific use.** While measures to control and restrict illicit substances are intended to prevent abuse, have inadvertently created difficulties for those who legitimately require controlled medicines. This scenario poses a challenge in balancing the prevention of abuse with ensuring adequate medical care.
- **Decline in drug-related crime.** Available data reveal a steady reduction in the incidence of criminal cases in recent years, which could indicate a possible downward trend in drug-related and other criminal activity, although great caution and analysis of medium and long-term trends is necessary before any conclusions can be drawn. Overall, a progressive strengthening in the effectiveness of the measures implemented to combat drug-related crime is discernible. However, there has been an increase in the illegal manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances and their analogues without the purpose of sale.

- **Positive and negative variations in seizures of illicit substances.** An overall decrease in the quantities of drugs seized has been observed, indicating a downward trend. However, there has been an increase in seizures of heroin and psychotropic substances, with the weight of heroin seizures being particularly relevant compared to other categories of seized drugs. In addition, there has been a notable increase in seizures of α -PVP, a substance belonging to the synthetic cathinone group, reflecting new trends in drug use in the country.
- **Availability of own raw materials for illicit drug manufacture.** The existence of raw materials within the country favours the illicit manufacture of drugs, which contributes to the increase in supply on the market. This availability of raw materials becomes a determining factor in the creation of clandestine laboratories, where illicit substances are produced clandestinely. The ease of access to these raw materials provides a solid base for the production and distribution of drugs nationally and internationally.
- **Level of knowledge of members of the Kyrgyz parliament on evidence-based drug policy decision-making.** Drug policy decision-making is a complex and multidimensional issue that requires a comprehensive and evidence-based approach. New members of parliament are not necessarily sufficiently informed about the latest developments in scientific research, international best practices and other countries' experiences in drug policy implementation.

4. What do the interviews and the questionnaire tell us?

4.1 Analysis of the interviews

In this section we will dive into an analysis of the interviews conducted in order to capture and understand the diverse perspectives expressed by the participants. Through these interviews, we have had the invaluable opportunity to **explore the experiences, opinions and knowledge of some key individuals** in relation to drug policy in Kyrgyzstan.

Each interview has been carefully conducted, providing a safe and welcoming space for participants to share their thoughts and reflections. We have gathered a wide variety of voices, covering different profiles, backgrounds and points of view, which **has allowed us to obtain a more complete and enriching view of the topic in question.**

Our main objective is to **draw meaningful and relevant conclusions from these testimonies in order** to gain a deeper understanding of the current drug situation in the country. The most relevant aspects that we have extracted from the interviews are presented below.

Positive aspects of drug policy highlighted in interviews

- **The methadone programme** is highlighted as a **positive measure** that has led to a decrease in heroin use and the harms associated with heroin use.
- Emphasis is placed on the **efforts that have been made through drug policy strategy papers** and international cooperation.
- It highlights **the work done to combat stigma and prevent drug use** through wellness activities and events in schools to provide information and combat the stigma associated with drug use.

Drug-related challenges highlighted in the interviews

- **The urgent need to improve methodologies and the dissemination of information** for the prevention of drug use is highlighted, as well as the challenges in the **treatment of users who use synthetic drugs.**
- It highlights the importance of **civil society involvement and the need for comprehensive support services** for drug users in Kyrgyzstan.
- It emphasises the **profound importance and imperative need to effectively address the challenges closely related to illicit drug trafficking** in the country of Kyrgyzstan.
- **The need to act decisively in the face of the progressive increase of synthetic drugs**, which have gained a foothold in the narcotics market in the country, is **strongly** emphasised.
- It highlights **the persistent problem of Afghan drugs transiting through the country's territory**, posing a threat to national security as well as a significant challenge to counter-narcotics efforts.
- It highlights the importance of paying special attention to and comprehensively addressing **the availability of raw materials for drug production within the country.**

- Priority attention is given to the fundamental task of **effectively and systematically preventing the entry of narcotic substances into the country's penitentiary institutions.**
- It highlights the need to **improve information sharing, training and addressing emerging issues** such as the use of cryptocurrencies in transactions to buy drugs.
- Areas for improvement are identified, such as the need to **strengthen rehabilitation centres by improving their technical equipment.**

4.2 Analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire

In this section, a comprehensive analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire developed for the second phase of Outcome 1: Drug Policies of the CADAP 7 Programme in Central Asia is carried out. The main objective of the questionnaire is to **collect relevant and accurate information on the needs and demands related to drug policies in the country.**

This analysis, together with the review of interviews and documentation provided by Kyrgyz counterparts, provides a **solid basis for establishing preliminary recommendations that will be useful for government authorities.** By combining these methodological approaches, the aim is to obtain a comprehensive and contextualised view of the current needs and challenges in the field of drug policy in Kyrgyzstan.

- **Majority consensus on the approach to drug policy in Kyrgyzstan.** It can be seen that there is a majority consensus on the importance of reducing both demand and the harms associated with drug use. These approaches are considered a priority in the country's drug policies.
- **Inclusion of harm reduction as an integral part of drug policy.** The majority of survey participants consider it very important. However, there are also some who consider it only fairly important, and some have doubts about its relevance. This suggests that there may still be some discrepancy or lack of clarity about the importance and benefits of harm reduction in the Kyrgyz context.
- **Importance of a comprehensive and multidimensional approach in the treatment of people who use drugs.** The importance of providing specialised medical and psychological treatment is highlighted, as well as promoting the social and occupational reintegration of drug addicts. Some respondents also mentioned the relevance of decriminalising drug use, implementing harm reduction programmes and providing support to affected families and communities. This indicates that there is recognition of the need for a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to tackling drug use and its consequences.
- **Rehabilitation and social reintegration of people with addiction problems.** Respondents consider a variety of options relevant, such as specialised treatment programmes, access to therapy and psychological support, support programmes for job search and vocational training, and support programmes for social and occupational reintegration. Inter-agency coordination, participation in self-help groups and therapeutic communities, and specialised care for people with addictions and co-morbid mental illnesses are also valued. However, some of them mentioned that not enough work is being done on the rehabilitation and social reintegration of people with addiction problems.

- **Significant concern about the use of non-prescription medicines containing psychotropic substances.** It is considered to be a fairly significant or very significant problem among the population of Kyrgyzstan. However, there is a lack of knowledge about actions taken by the government to reduce this problem. Some respondents mentioned regulation of the sale of non-prescription drugs and awareness-raising campaigns as possible measures.
- **Consideration of alcohol consumption as a problematic phenomenon in the country because of its adverse consequences.** It is considered a very important or quite important problem in Kyrgyz society. Several reasons were mentioned for this, such as the increase in the number of women addicted to alcohol, the impact on the health of children and families, the presence of homemade and counterfeit products on the market, the link with crime and domestic violence, and the impact on unemployment and the lack of control on alcohol sales.
- **Significant concern about HIV in the drug using population in Kyrgyzstan.** The majority of respondents consider this to be an important and urgent concern. This indicates that there is recognition of the importance of addressing HIV in this particular population.
- **Actions implemented in the country to address the stigma associated with drug addiction.** Several initiatives implemented in Kyrgyzstan to reduce stigma were mentioned, such as state programmes related to HIV and harm reduction, training of service providers, information and education activities and actions, and awareness-raising campaigns. However, some respondents noted that stigma and discrimination towards people with addiction problems still persists, and that more effort is needed to address this problem.
- **Identification of factors contributing to illicit drug trafficking in Kyrgyzstan.** Corruption in security forces and law enforcement agencies, the use of information and communication technologies, the influence of criminal groups and criminal organisations, and the country's geographical location as a transit hub for drugs are the main factors identified by participants.
- **Main weaknesses in the anti-drug strategy identified by respondents.** Lack of coordination between government agencies, weak institutional capacity to deal with NPS and lack of financial and material resources to implement effective drug prevention and treatment programmes are emphasised as key weaknesses in Kyrgyzstan's anti-drug strategy.
- **Weaknesses identified by respondents in legislation related to the drug phenomenon.** The lack of effective treatment and rehabilitation programmes, and insufficient coordination between government agencies in charge of drug law enforcement are the main weaknesses identified in Kyrgyzstan's anti-drug legislation.
- **Importance of civil society participation in drug policy formulation and implementation.** Respondents consider it important and necessary. Different forms of participation were mentioned, such as working with non-governmental organisations, consulting and actively listening to the voices of people who use drugs, participating in dialogue roundtables and promoting citizen participation in general.

5. Conclusions

- **Shifting patterns of drug use, from an escapist to a recreational model of drug use.** This is perhaps the most salient of the changes detected in Kyrgyzstan: in recent years, there has been a notable shift in drug use patterns, characterised by a significant transition from substance use linked to highly problematic, mainly opiate drugs such as heroin, towards more recreational drug use, linked to a greater extent to leisure spaces, and which although also presenting significant risks, their impacts are generally much lower on physical and social health, and are linked to a lower burden of social stigma. This shift has been driven by a growing interest in more playful and pleasurable experiences, and undoubtedly follows a pattern that began in EU countries around the 1990s and has been consolidating over the first two decades of the 21st century.
- **Differentiated responses to the two patterns of use identified in the country.** Responses implemented to address the problems associated with heroin use will not be useful for dealing with synthetic and recreational drug use. Consequently, it will be imperative to adopt different approaches to address the challenges that have arisen as a result of the changing pattern of use in the country.
- **Diversification in the drug market in Kyrgyzstan.** The shift towards synthetic drugs, recreational drugs and non-medical use of pharmaceuticals reflects a transformation in the drug market in the country. This evolution implies the need for new responses to deal with this type of drug use.
- **Changing patterns of use and profile of users.** Synthetic drug use may attract a different set of users than heroin use. There is likely to be an increase in use among young people, among people seeking different leisure experiences, and in different social strata from those seen so far, most likely growing among the middle and upper social classes in the country, which requires a more precise and targeted understanding of preventive actions to be taken.
- **Kyrgyzstan's geographical location poses considerable challenges in the fight against drug trafficking.** Both Kyrgyzstan in particular and the Central Asian region as a whole are embedded in the transit routes used for the distribution of drugs to European countries, Asian countries and other regions of the Global North. Thus, despite changing consumption patterns among the local population, the problem with opium and heroin trafficking may remain significant in the country as a transit point for international routes.
- **The low supply of controlled psychoactive drugs for medical and scientific use makes it difficult for patients to access necessary medical and scientific treatment.** This can lead to a diminished quality of life for people suffering from chronic pain or conditions that require the use of these substances.
- **Trends and variations in drug-related crime in Kyrgyzstan.** Significant reductions have been recorded in several aspects of drug-related crime in Kyrgyzstan. A marked decrease in the crimes of theft, illegal prescription of drugs and illicit trafficking in strong and poisonous substances, with a negative percentage change of 100%, stands out. In addition, significant decreases have been observed in the encouragement of drug use (-87.5%) and in the cultivation of plants containing narcotic substances (-70%), as well as in the organisation of places for the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (61.5%). Although to a lesser extent, slight reductions have also been recorded in other drug-related crimes. On the other hand, a moderate increase has been observed in

the illegal manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances without the purpose of sale (+55.3%). These data reflect significant changes in several drug-related areas, underlining the importance of continuing to address these challenges in society.

- **Trends and variations in seizures of drugs and psychotropic substances in Kyrgyzstan.** During the period from 2017 to 2021, notable variations in seizures of drugs and psychotropic substances have been observed in Kyrgyzstan. These seizures can be classified into three main categories according to the percentage increase or decrease. First, seizures with significant increases stand out, such as α -PVP (+263,328%) and psychotropic substances (+5,941%). These figures reflect a notable increase in the presence and trafficking of these substances in the country. In second place are seizures that experienced a significant increase, such as heroin (+343%). This indicates increased activity related to this particular drug. Finally, we identify seizures that have decreased in intensity, such as pharmaceuticals (-99%), opium poppy plants (-95%), cannabis plants (-95%) and marijuana (-65%). These seizures provide an insight into the drug trafficking and consumption landscape in Kyrgyzstan during the reporting period, showing fluctuations in the supply and demand for various substances in the country.
- **Trends and variations in HIV testing and cases by sex in Kyrgyzstan.** Over the period 2017-2021, significant changes and variations have been observed in HIV cases by sex in Kyrgyzstan. Importantly, there has been a remarkable 40% increase in HIV prevalence among the population over the past five years, while there has been a significant 88% reduction in new HIV cases related to drug use. However, there has been an 8.5% increase in the total number of PWID, with an increase of 46% among women and 36% among men. In addition, a 4% decrease in new HIV cases has been observed. These results reflect the HIV situation in Kyrgyzstan during the reporting period and underline the need to continue implementing prevention and treatment measures to effectively address this challenge.

6. Reflections as preliminary recommendations

This section focuses on addressing the new challenges that have emerged in the drug field in Kyrgyzstan, a country located in Central Asia. In a constantly evolving context, Kyrgyzstan is facing a number of complex challenges that require a review and adaptation of its existing drug policies. The transformation in the consumption pattern, with the shift towards recreational and synthetic drugs, poses a number of additional problems and risks that need to be effectively addressed. Below is a set of key recommendations to address these challenges and promote a comprehensive and balanced approach to drug policy in Kyrgyzstan.

It should again be stressed here that these recommendations are made here on a preliminary basis, as they will be further developed and concretised at a later stage, once the «Regional Seminar on Building and Strengthening Balanced and Evidence-Based Drug Policies» has taken place, and it has been analysed which of the concrete actions undertaken by EU Member States can be useful for Kyrgyz institutions in this regard.

- **Align new anti-drug strategies with emerging new patterns of consumption**, as is being done in the other countries where this model change came earlier and where it has already taken hold.
- **Address new channels for drug purchases through cyber-security measures** to detect, track and neutralise illicit online transactions.
- **Tackling the underlying causes of drug use in a comprehensive manner**, focusing on social, psychological and environmental aspects.
- **Promote greater efforts to combat stigma and discrimination** against people with addiction problems.
- **Prioritise and strengthen rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes** by providing comprehensive support to promote recovery and reduce relapse rates.
- **Conduct research and evaluation** of policies and programmes implemented.
- **Strengthen drug prevention and education through** intra-family communication.
- **Incorporate technical teams in trips abroad to meet and learn from successful practices** in drug policy.

7. Documentation consulted

7.1 Documentation used for the Systematisation Report

- Decree N° 54 of 2022 [Cabinet of Ministers]. Anti-Drug Programme 2014-2019. 27th January 2022.
- Decree N° 445 of 2022 [Cabinet of Ministers]. Anti-drug programme of the Kyrgyz Republic. 10 August 2022.
- Review of the current anti-drug legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic. [Internal document from CADAP Kyrgyzstan]
- Review on the drug situation in the Kyrgyz Republic and the measures to combat illicit drug trafficking for 6 months 2021. [Internal document from CADAP Kyrgyzstan]
- UNODC (2022). Paris Country Fact Sheet. Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

7.2 Documentation reviewed

- Code on Infringements [CI]. N° 58 of 13th April 2017. (Republic of Kyrgyzstan).
- Code of Offences [CD]. N° 128 of 28th October 2021. (Republic of Kyrgyzstan).
- Criminal Code [CC]. N° 19 of 24th January 2017. (Republic of Kyrgyzstan).
- Criminal Procedure Code [CPC]. N° 129 of 28th October 2021. (Republic of Kyrgyzstan).
- Decree 435 of 2021 [Cabinet of Ministers]. Whereby the Concept for the Implementation of the National Alert Mechanism for New Synthetic Drugs and New Psychoactive Substances has been elaborated. 12th October 2021.

Systematisation Report of the National Drug Policy

Dialogue in Tajikistan

CADAP 7 – Component 1: Drug Policy



1. Introduction

The Systematisation Report of the «National Drug Policy Dialogue» provides a comprehensive analysis of the background, key findings, conclusions, and preliminary recommendations on drug policy in the Republic of Tajikistan. This analysis is based on active participation in the National Dialogue, a thorough study of relevant documentation and the administration of a needs assessment questionnaire to gain an in-depth understanding of the drug policy needs of stakeholders involved in the policy-making process. Various sources of analysis have been used, which are summarised below.

- **Available documentation on drug policy in Tajikistan.** Ten documents covering legal-normative and analytical issues of the drug situation in the country have been analysed.
- **«National Drug Policy Dialogue»,** which was attended by twenty people from different ministries of the Republic of Tajikistan, Non-Governmental Organisations and representatives of the EU, as well as FIIAPP and CADAP.
- **Needs assessment questionnaire,** which was sent to all institutions represented in the National Dialogue and was answered by five representatives of these institutions during the month of June 2023.

Episteme Social conceived the National Dialogue as a valuable occasion to carry out a **detailed assessment of Tajikistan's needs in relation to drug policy**, considering the perspective of the various actors involved. The ultimate purpose of this initiative is to provide in this Systematisation Report a **comprehensive analysis of the needs identified.**

The Systematisation Report for Tajikistan follows a well-defined structure. First, a **review of drug policies in the country is undertaken**, analysing the available documentation in detail and examining the legal basis for these policies. This is followed by **a detailed section on the «National Drug Policy Dialogue»,** where the key issues that emerged during this event are discussed in depth. Subsequently, the **most relevant aspects of the needs assessment questionnaire,** which was distributed to all the institutions participating in this meeting, are presented. Once the detailed analysis has been carried out, **a series of conclusions and reflections are presented, leading to the first preliminary recommendations.**

2. Analysis of documentation

In this «Analysis of documentation» section, we examine the legal and regulatory situation of psychoactive substances in Tajikistan, as well as the initiatives implemented by the state authorities. In addition, we carry out an analysis of the current drug situation in the country, with the aim of gaining a more detailed and up-to-date understanding of this challenge.

2.1 Drug legislation in Tajikistan

International legal instruments

The following conventions presented in Table 17 highlight Tajikistan's commitments in addressing the drug phenomenon by acceding to treaties that establish an internationally recognised legal and normative framework, reflecting its strong determination to effectively address this global drug-related challenge.

Table 17. Ratification of International Drug Treaties in Tajikistan²⁷

Treaty	Status
Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961	26 March 1997 (Accession)
Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971	26 March 1997 (Accession)
United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988	26 March 1997 (Accession)

National legal instruments²⁸

In order to strengthen and improve the existing legislation in the field of drug control, a number of amendments have been made to the legal and regulatory acts applicable in Tajikistan. **These amendments reflect the country's continued commitment to preventing drug use and addressing illicit trafficking in narcotic substances.** During this process, adjustments have been made to several articles of the Code on Administrative Offences and a new National List of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors has been developed. These amendments are based on decrees and provisions of the Government of Tajikistan, as well as recommendations of the UN Conventions.

In this regard, the country's government authorities have demonstrated a dynamic and diverse approach to drug legislation, demonstrating their commitment to addressing the global challenges associated with this problem. Thus, in order to efficiently and effectively address the various aspects related to the consumption, trafficking and production of narcotic substances, the country has established a solid and comprehensive regulatory framework.

²⁷ UNODC, 2022

²⁸ Internal document from CADAP 7 Tajikistan

2.2 Drug policies in Tajikistan

Strategies implemented

In 1999, the Drug Control Agency was established under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan in order to improve the system of law enforcement structures. Subsequently, in 2004, the Coordinating Council for Drug Abuse Prevention in the Republic of Tajikistan was established by Presidential Decree N° 1310.

- In November 2007, the «**Single State Programme for the Prevention of Drug Abuse and Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking for the years 2008-2012²⁹**» was approved, with the aim of preventing drug use, providing treatment and rehabilitation, strengthening the control of illicit trafficking, promoting international cooperation and fostering inter-agency collaboration.
- Subsequently, in February 2013, the «**National Strategy for Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking in the Republic of Tajikistan 2013-2020**» was adopted with the main objective of significantly reducing the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and their non-medical use, the magnitude of the consequences of their illicit trafficking for the safety of public health, society and the state.

Table 18 below specifies the main goals and approaches of the previous National Strategy that was approved by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Table 18. Anti-Drug Strategy 2013-2020 in Tajikistan³⁰

Strategy 2013-2020
Development, adoption and implementation of sectoral programmes for the prevention of illicit drug trafficking
Improving the interdepartmental cooperation mechanism for combating illicit drug trafficking
Strengthening and improving the material and technical basis of the law enforcement agencies.
Strengthening the border control system
Extending international cooperation in the field of drug trafficking control
Improvement of the material and technical basis of the drug treatment service and introduction of effective treatment methods.
Creation of a network of institutions for the rehabilitation of drug addicts and their material and technical equipment.
Increasing the level of scientific and research activities in the field of drug trafficking control, prevention and treatment of drug addiction and rehabilitation of drug addicts.
Improvements in the organisational, policy, legal and resource endowment of anti-drug activities

²⁹ http://www.adlia.tj/show_doc.fvx?rgn=11909

³⁰ <https://akn.tj/ru/2020/12/03/national-strategy-to-combat-illicit-drug-trafficking-in-the-republic-of-tajikistan-for-2013-2020/>

Drug strategy 2021-2030³¹

The National Drug Control Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period 2021-2030, consisting of a total of 43 actions for the period 2021-2025, is a strategic planning act developed to ensure the security and public health of the country, taking into account national and international practices. The main objectives of the Strategy are to **ensure the security of the Republic of Tajikistan against drug threats and their harmful effects, and to strengthen the fight against illicit drug trafficking**, which represents a source of financing for international terrorism.

Table 19 below shows the organisational structure in which the actions envisaged for the first period of the National Strategy are included.

Table 19. National Drug Control Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period 2021-2030

National Drug Control Strategy (2021-2030)
Organisational measures
Tackling illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors
Control of licit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors
Prevention of drug addiction
Human resources training in drug control and prevention
International cooperation
Improving regulatory legal acts in the field of drug control

In this regard, it is important to highlight the following key aspects of the actions included in the National Strategy for the period 2021-2030:

- **Commitment to monitoring and evaluating the implementation** of the drug control strategy, as well as reviewing the results.
- **Improvements in the regulatory legal acts on drug control** by bringing them in line with international drug control standards.
- **Strengthening international cooperation.**
- **Commitment to improving professional training** in the field of drug prevention and control.

2.3 Drug situation in Tajikistan³²

Tajikistan faces significant challenges in relation to the drug phenomenon. As a key transit country on the Central Asian drug route, it is in a strategic geographical position that exposes it to various illicit drug-related activities. Drug trafficking, illicit cultivation and domestic consumption are major concerns for the Tajik

³¹ Order N° 145 of 2021. National Drug Control Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021–2030.

³² Order N° 145 of 2021

government and society. These problems not only threaten the security and well-being of the population, but also have implications for the country's social stability, economic development and governance.

Key factors in the current drug situation in Tajikistan

In the context of Tajikistan, the following factors are identified as influencing the drug situation in the country.

- **Drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Tajikistan**, followed by transport to other countries.
- **The expansion of the illegal drug trade through the use of the Internet.**
- **Illegal importation of new types of synthetic drugs** and psychotropic substances, which are analogues of narcotic drugs, from foreign countries.
- **Increasing use of non-prescription drugs** containing narcotic substances **among young people.**
- **The increase in the number of cases of HIV and AIDS.**

Current measures to combat drug trafficking in Tajikistan

The government of Tajikistan is currently promoting the following measures to combat drug trafficking in the country.

- Implementation of specific measures **for access to prescription narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.**
- **Improved cooperation with the media**, in order to develop and present recommendations to their representatives to present the issues of drug abuse and drug prevention.
- **Development of educational programmes and methodological recommendations** for the prevention of drug dependence and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.
- **Introduction of changes and amendments to the national list of narcotic drugs**, psychotropic substances and their precursors, drug analogues.

Drug-related crime in Tajikistan

In this section, we focus on the issue of drug-related crime in Tajikistan in order to analyse the current situation in detail. Through the analysis, we explore the current drug-related crime situation in depth, with an emphasis on the trends observed and the most frequent types of crime. This analysis provides us with a comprehensive overview of the problem and lays the groundwork for addressing it more effectively in the specific context of Tajikistan. Table 20 examines trends in drug-related crime in Tajikistan from 2017 to 2021.

Table 20. Statistics of drug-related crimes according to the Criminal Code of the Tajik Republic (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Variation % Change (2017 - 2021)
With intent to sell (Art. 200)³³	71	68	73	73	76	+7.04
No intention to sell (Art. 201)³⁴	19	14	15	13	8	-57.9
Smuggling (Art. 289)	6	12	7	11	12	+100
Other (Art. 202; 204; 205; 206)³⁵	4	6	5	3	4	-
Total offences	820	812	582	700	707	-13.8

Source: UNODC (2022)

- **The total number of drug-related offences has experienced minimal fluctuations over the years**, ranging from 582 in 2019 to 820 in 2017. Although there have been variations, the overall trend appears to have remained stable over this period, with a 13.8% decrease in the total number of drug-related offences.
- **Offences with intent to sell drugs have shown a generally stable trend, with minor fluctuations in recent years.** The values vary between 68 and 76 cases.
- **On the other hand, offences without intent to sell drugs show a gradual decrease over the period studied**, from 19 cases in 2017 to 8 in 2021.
- **Drug smuggling offences have followed a generally stable pattern with some fluctuations over time.** Although variations have been observed, the total number of smuggling cases has increased from 6 to 12 over the years.
- **Other drug-related offences (Art. 202; 204; 205; 206) show a generally stable trend with minor fluctuations over the period studied.** The values remain low, varying between 3 and 6 cases.

Main drugs seized in Tajikistan

In this section, the most frequently seized drugs in Tajikistan are explored in detail. As the country is located on a major drug trafficking route, the smuggling and illegal circulation of narcotic substances is a constant challenge. The analysis provides us with a clear understanding of current trends in this field. It also allows us to take a closer look at the most frequently seized drugs and to understand their impact on Tajik society.

³³ Illicit trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances with intent to sell (Art. 200).

³⁴ Illegal handling of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (Art. 201).

³⁵ Theft of drugs and precursors (Art. 202); illegal cultivation of plants containing narcotic substances (Art. 204); organisation or possession of dens for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (Art. 205) and illegal trafficking in strong or poisonous substances for the purpose of sale (Art. 206).

Table 21. Seizures of different drugs and psychotropic substances in kilograms in Tajikistan (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Variation % Change (2017 - 2021)
Heroin	110.02	282.18	171.72	118.45	251.92	+128.9
Opium	1,211.27	1,606.79	788.43	788.80	593.94	-50.9
Marijuana	742.68	496.99	60.52	158.92	142.35	-80.8
Hashish	2,387.01	1,310.34	607.91	1,315.67	2,989.44	+25.2
Cannabis plants	1,261,738	1,563,990	2,238,019	1,432,972	1,547,038	+22.6
Amphetamine (tablet)	5	15	-	731	5,088	+101,660
Methamphetamine	7.56	1.85	5.49	39.88	101.47	+1,242.2
MDMA (tablet)	10,229	15,865	7,555	7,972	n/a	-22.06³⁶
Phenobarbital (tablet)	280	255	390	370	418	+49.29
Diazepam (tablet)	20	40	n/a	141	645	+3,125
Alprazolam (tablet)	-	1,380	n/a	n/a	15,099	+994.13³⁷
Total	1,276,760	1,585,191	2,246,342	1,444,300	1,569,568	+22.93

Source: UNODC (2022)

- During the reporting period, a significant increase in heroin seizures has been observed, **with a positive change of 128.9%**. In contrast, **a 50.9% decrease in opium seizures has been recorded**.
- Significant changes have been recorded in seizures of cannabis-related substances. **A drastic decrease of 8.8% in marijuana seizures was noted**, while **seizures of hashish increased by 25.2%**. In addition, **an increase of 22.6% in seizures of cannabis plants** has been observed during the same period analysed.
- During the period under review, **there was a significant increase in seizures of amphetamine and methamphetamine tablets in the country**. In 2017, only 5 amphetamine tablets were seized, while in 2021 the figure rose to 731, **representing a growth of 101,660%**. As for methamphetamine, **there is a progressive increase in seizures**, from 7.56 kg in 2017 to 101.47

³⁶ Percentage change between 2017 and 2020

³⁷ Percentage change between 2018 and 2021

kg in 2021, **representing a growth of 1,242%**. These data reveal a notable increase in the availability and use of these substances during this period.

- Both diazepam and alprazolam have shown interesting patterns in seizures over the period 2017 to 2021. **In the case of diazepam, a progressive increase in seizures has been observed over these years.** On the other hand, **alprazolam** has presented absent data in 2017 and 2019, but **has experienced a notable increase in 2018 with 1,380 tablets seized, and an even higher value in 2021 with 15,099 tablets.**
- On the other hand, **data for MDMA show a decrease in seizures over the years.** In 2017, 10,229 tablets were seized, which decreased to 7,972 tablets in 2020. **This represents a 22.06% reduction in MDMA seizures over the period.**

Registered drug users in dispensaries in Tajikistan

In this section, the situation of registered drug users in Tajik clinics is analysed. However, the lack of accurate data for the years 2020 and 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, prevents a more complete assessment of the evolution in the type of drugs consumed by registered users in dispensaries during the period analysed. It is therefore necessary to bear in mind that the present analysis is based on the data available to date and may not fully reflect the current situation. Despite these limitations, a comprehensive review of the available information is undertaken to understand the overall picture of registered drug users in Tajik clinics.

Table 22. Drug users registered in dispensaries, by drug type (%) in Tajikistan (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total number of registered drug users	6,947	6,059	5,375	5,099	4,749
By drug type (%)					
Opioid users	93	90	74	n/a	n/a
Heroin users (among all drug users)	79	78	n/a	73	n/a
Cannabinoid users	5	5	6	n/a	n/a
Polydrug users	4	5	6	n/a	n/a
MDMA users	0.01	0.02	-	n/a	n/a

Source: UNODC (2022)

- Between 2017 and 2021, there is a **gradual decrease in the total number of registered drug users in dispensaries from 6,947 to 4,749**, with a negative percentage decrease of 31%.
- Analysing the data by drug type, **opioid users accounted for the highest proportion of registered users in all years**, with percentages ranging from 93% to 74%.

Trends in drug treatment and overdose cases in Tajikistan

This section examines trends in drug treatment and overdose cases in Tajikistan. Through the analysis of treatment centre records, a comprehensive picture of the evolution of drug users and overdose cases over the period analysed is obtained. The ultimate goal is to gain a deeper understanding of trends and patterns related to drug treatment and overdose in Tajikistan.

Table 23. Drug treatment and drug overdoses registered in treatment centres in Tajikistan (2015-2019)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% change (2015-2019)
Heroin users	481	423	474	356	350	-27.23
Opium users	74	91	57	70	75	+1.35
Hashish users	8	3	2	4	18	+125
Polydrug users	84	43	38	70	56	-33.33
Treated drug abusers	647	560	571	641	639	+1.24
Drug overdoses	49	15	11	11	4	-91.83

Source: UNODC (2022)

- **The number of people treated for drug abuse has experienced a slight positive change of 1.24%** in the period from 2015 to 2019.
- **The significant decrease in heroin users is notable, with a negative variation of 27.23%** from 2015 to 2019. On the other hand, there is a slight increase in the number of **opium users, with a positive change of 1.35%**.
- The number of **hashish users has seen a significant increase of 125%** from 2015 to 2019.
- The population of **polydrug users has decreased by 33.33%**.
- **A drastic decrease in drug overdoses of 91.83%** in the number of registered cases has been observed from 2015 to 2019.

HIV status in Tajikistan

This section analyses the HIV situation in Tajikistan, providing a broad overview of the problem in the country. HIV continues to represent a significant public health challenge in Tajikistan, and understanding the current situation is critical to developing effective strategies. It explores trends over time and identifies challenges and opportunities for improving the HIV response in the specific context of Tajikistan.

Table 24. Trends and changes in HIV testing and cases by sex in Tajikistan (2016-2020)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% change 2016-2020
Tested for HIV	509,092	612,123	780,688	1,062,508	805,120	+58.14
New HIV cases	1,038	1,205	1,421	1,320	1,084	+4.43
Male	621	735	883	771	n/a	+24.15³⁸
Female	417	470	538	549	n/a	+31.65
Including by mode of transmission (%)						
Sexual contacts	65	66	n/a	73	n/a	+12.31
IDU	19	20	n/a	10	n/a	-47.37
Mother-to-child	5	5	n/a	4	n/a	-20
Others	11	9	n/a	13	n/a	+18.18
Total HIV cases	8,583	9,957	10,695	12,420	12,876	+50.02
IDUs (%)	41	32	n/a	n/a	n/a	-
PLWH	6,056	7,094	7,812	8,756	9,459	+56.19

Source: UNODC (2022)

- **There is a slight increase in the number of new HIV cases** from 2016 to 2020, with a percentage change of 4.43%.
- In relation to gender, an increase in the number of HIV cases in both men and women has been observed over the years analysed. During the period from 2016 to 2020, **there was a 24.15% increase in HIV cases in males, and a 31.65% increase in HIV cases in females.**
- **There is a significant increase in the number of people tested for HIV** over the years, with an **increase of 58.14%** in the period from 2016 to 2020.
There is a **significant increase of 56.19% in the number of PLWH** from 2016 to 2020.

³⁸ In Table 24, if «n/a» is displayed, the percentage change between 2016 and 2019 is calculated.

3. National Drug Policy Dialogue

3.1 Stakeholders involved in the National Drug Policy Dialogue

On 21st June 2023, Tajikistan became the epicentre of a momentous event in the framework of the CADAP 7 Programme: The National Drug Policy Dialogue. In the city of Dushanbe, leaders and decision-makers gathered to establish an enriching dialogue and share their vision on how to address the country's substance-related challenges.

The event was attended by leading representatives of the government of Tajikistan, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Drug Control Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the National Centre for monitoring and prevention of drug use and the Republican Rehabilitation Centre «Tangai». In addition, representatives of important non-governmental organisations in the country, such as Youth House and Spin Plus, attended the event. Table 25 below shows in detail all the institutions who attended the National Drug Policy Dialogue in the Republic of Tajikistan.

Table 25. Attendees at the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Tajikistan

	Institution
European Union	Delegation of the EU to the Tajik Republic
	Delegation of the EU to the Kyrgyz Republic
	FIIAPP
Republic of Tajikistan	DCA
	MFA
	MJ
	MI
	NCMPDU
	Republican Rehabilitation Centre «Tangai»
	NGO «Youth House»
	NGO «Spin Plus»

As part of the international CADAP team, the following drug policy experts joined the event: PhD. David Pere Martínez Oró, PhD. Ricard Faura and Mr. Roger Cáceres from Episteme Social, and PhD. Viktor Mravčík, representative of Podané Ruce.

3.2 Main issues emerging

During the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Tajikistan, the key issues addressed are outlined, including a description of the issues raised and the many options and suggestions for their resolution, which were the subject of discussion at the event.

1. The new national drug control strategy for the period 2021-2030 is mentioned, with the **main objective of safeguarding the country's drug security**.
2. It outlines the **status of the HIV epidemic in the country and the responses that have been implemented through** the «National Programme to Combat the HIV Epidemic by 2021-2025».
3. The **importance of the use of stimulants such as methadone as a tool for the treatment of opioid addiction** and the reduction of associated harms is highlighted.

3.3 Analysis of concerns emerging from the National Dialogue

A comprehensive analysis of drug-related findings in Tajikistan is essential to obtain a clear picture of the current situation. By collecting information in this area, we can identify the government's objectives and assess the extent to which they have been achieved, especially with regard to reducing drug supply and demand in the country. It is important to note that this analysis has been carried out exclusively on the basis of the National Dialogue and the documentation provided by the authorities consulted, these being the only resources available at this point in time.

- **Emergence of New Psychoactive Substances.** These substances have experienced remarkable growth and their rapid evolution and diversity make them difficult to detect and regulate, posing even greater challenges for the control of their production and distribution. Authorities are assessing how to adapt and continuously update their strategies and policies to address this emerging phenomenon and safeguard the health and well-being of the population.
- **Increasing use of non-prescription drugs containing narcotic substances among young people.** The increased availability and accessibility of non-prescription drugs containing narcotic substances has contributed significantly to the spread of this problem in Tajikistan. These drugs, such as opioids and tranquillisers, originally designed to relieve moderate to severe pain, are being used inappropriately and recreationally by young people in the country. In this situation, it is critical that government authorities respond effectively, based on the available scientific evidence.
- **Transit route for drug trafficking from Afghanistan.** The geographical location of Afghanistan and Tajikistan plays a crucial role in shaping this transit route. The permeable and difficult to control mountainous border creates conditions conducive to drug smuggling. Moreover, Tajikistan's proximity to the main transport arteries connecting Asia and Europe makes it an attractive transit point for narcotics traffickers. As a result of this route, Tajikistan faces a number of significant challenges.
- **Expansion of the illegal drug trade through the use of the Internet.** The illegal online drug trade has expanded significantly in Tajikistan, posing challenges for the authorities and society at large. The accessibility and anonymity offered by the internet has facilitated the sale and distribution of psychoactive substances through clandestine websites, social networks and the Dark Web. This

expansion entails risks for society, such as increased consumption and addiction, with serious consequences for the health and well-being of citizens.

- **Decline in drug-related crime.** An overall decrease in drug-related crime has been observed, which is a significant step forward in tackling this problem. However, it is important to mention that there has been an increase in crimes of illicit trafficking of drugs and psychotropic substances with intent to sell, as well as in cases of smuggling. Despite these specific increases, there has been a decrease in the overall number of crimes. This indicates that the authorities and law enforcement have implemented effective actions to address the problem in a comprehensive manner, not only in relation to drugs, but also in other aspects of organised crime.
- **Increase in drug seizures.** A notable increase in drug seizures has been observed in Tajikistan in the reporting period, reflecting the country's continued effective efforts to tackle illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The increase in drug seizures not only reflects the enhanced capacity of law enforcement agencies, but also a clear sign of the Tajik government's determination to protect its population and safeguard national security. The actions implemented have contributed to the disruption of drug supply chains and have had a positive impact on reducing the availability of illegal drugs in the country.
- **Decrease in the number of registered drug users in dispensaries.** An encouraging decrease in the number of registered drug users in dispensaries has been observed. This positive indicator reflects the efforts and policies implemented by the government and health authorities to address the problem of drug use and to promote the health and well-being of the population. However, it is important to note that the decline in the number of registered drug users in clinics is a positive indicator but should not be considered as a complete reflection of the situation.
- **Decline in drug overdoses.** The decline in drug overdoses in Tajikistan is a promising indicator of the efforts made to address this public health problem. Comprehensive approaches involving prevention, treatment and collaboration between various actors have significantly reduced the number of overdoses and ultimately saved lives. However, it is essential to maintain this approach and to continue to work tirelessly to protect people from the risks associated with drug use and to foster a healthier and safer society.
- **Increase in HIV cases.** In recent years, the country has experienced a significant increase in cases of HIV infection. This phenomenon poses a significant public health concern and demands a deeper understanding of the underlying factors contributing to this increase. Analysis of the statistics also reveals that new HIV cases are almost evenly distributed across the country, with significant increases in both men and women. These findings, obtained from the literature review and official statistics, underline the importance of comprehensively addressing the factors contributing to this worrying situation.

4. What do the results of the questionnaire tell us?

4.1 Analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire

In this section, a thorough analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire specifically designed for the second phase of Outcome 1: Drug Policies of the CADAP 7 Programme in Tajikistan is carried out. The main purpose of this questionnaire is to collect accurate and relevant information on the demands and requirements related to drug policies in the country.

Through this analysis, together with the review of documentation provided by Tajik counterparts, a solid basis is established to formulate preliminary recommendations that are of value to government authorities. By combining these methodological approaches, a comprehensive and contextualised understanding of the current needs and challenges in the field of drug policy in Tajikistan is sought.

- **Different assessment of the importance of demand and supply reduction and harm reduction.** A broad consensus is evident regarding the prioritisation of drug demand and supply reduction as the main focus of drug policy in the country. To a lesser extent, the importance of addressing harm reduction associated with drug use is also recognised.
- **Unanimity on the inclusion of harm reduction as an integral part of drug policy.** All respondents agree that it is vitally important to incorporate harm reduction into the country's drug policy.
- **Diversity of options for approaching the treatment of people who use drugs.** The importance of offering specialised medical and psychological treatment, as well as implementing harm reduction programmes in order to minimise the risks related to drug use is emphasised. In addition, some participants mentioned the relevance of providing support and resources to families and communities affected by drug addiction and advocated for the decriminalisation of drug use as a measure to reduce stigma and improve access to treatment services.
- **Rehabilitation and social reintegration of people with addiction problems.** Respondents recognise the importance of various options, such as specialised treatment programmes, access to therapy and psychological support, programmes for job search and vocational training, as well as access to programmes promoting social and occupational reintegration. In addition, the promotion of self-help groups and therapeutic communities is valued, along with educational and training programmes focused on relapse prevention.
- **Significant concern about the use of non-prescription medicines containing psychotropic substances.** This is an issue of high relevance and significant importance among respondents. Actions underway in the country to address this issue are mentioned, such as regulating the sale of OTC medicines, conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the harms associated with OTC use, promoting education on the responsible use of medicines, and improving the monitoring and control of the sale of medicines in pharmacies and other establishments.
- **Diversity of views when considering alcohol consumption as a problem in the country.** The results of the questionnaire reveal a lack of consensus regarding the importance of alcohol

consumption in Tajikistan, highlighting a tendency towards uncertainty and the absence of a clearly defined position.

- **Significant concern about HIV in the drug using population in Tajikistan.** Most respondents agree that this is an important and pressing concern. However, a segment of respondents feels that, although it is a significant concern, it has not been given due attention. In this regard, it is crucial that there is explicit recognition of the importance of addressing HIV in the country, involving all affected parties.
- **Actions implemented to address the stigma associated with drug addiction.** Several initiatives implemented in Tajikistan to reduce the stigma associated with drug addiction were mentioned, such as training courses, seminars and campaigns to address this issue, which are supported by the inclusion of this approach in the National Strategy.
- **Identification of factors contributing to illicit drug trafficking in Tajikistan.** Several factors are identified that highlight the importance of the country's geographical location and its role as a transit hub for drugs to other nations, as well as the use of information and communication technologies, social networks and messaging applications in the context of illicit drug trafficking. However, it is relevant to note that a part of the people surveyed showed a lack of knowledge about the factors that contribute to this phenomenon in the country.
- **Main weaknesses in the anti-drug strategy identified by respondents.** The main weaknesses are the lack of financial and material resources to implement effective drug prevention and treatment programmes, as well as the lack of monitoring and evaluation measures to determine the effectiveness of anti-drug policies and programmes. However, it is important to note that some respondents are unaware of the actions planned by the Tajik authorities in this area.
- **Weaknesses identified by respondents in legislation related to the drug phenomenon.** Emphasis is placed on the lack of preventive actions aimed at reducing the demand for drugs, the insufficiency of effective programmes for the treatment and rehabilitation of individuals affected by substance use, the need for adequate criminalisation of drug trafficking and distribution, and the scarce investment in educational initiatives and public awareness campaigns about drug use and the risks involved.
- **Importance of civil society participation in drug policy formulation and implementation.** Respondents consider it very important to involve civil society in the development and evaluation of drug policies in the country. Various forms of participation are mainly mentioned, including the promotion of spaces for dialogue and collaboration between civil society and the relevant authorities, as well as the inclusion of representative civil society groups in relevant committees and working groups.

5. Conclusions

- **A shift in the pattern of drug use from escapist to recreational drug use.** This shift in the pattern of drug use in Tajikistan stands out as one of the most notable. In recent times, a significant shift has been observed from substance use linked to highly problematic drugs, mainly opiates such as heroin, towards more recreational use linked to entertainment venues. Although these recreational drugs also carry significant risks, their physical and social health impacts are generally lower and are associated with a reduced social burden. This shift has been driven by a growing interest in recreational and pleasurable experiences, following a pattern similar to that which started in EU countries in the 1990s and has been consolidated throughout the first two decades of the 21st century.
- **Differentiated responses to the two consumption patterns identified in the country.** To address this situation, it is crucial to implement tailored and specific responses. In the case of traditional drug use, an approach focused on health and wellbeing is required, prioritising harm reduction and access to health care services. On the other hand, the use of synthetic substances requires a combination of preventive and risk reduction strategies. Both responses must comprehensively address the underlying factors contributing to the use of these substances in Tajikistan.
- **Diversification of the drug market in Tajikistan.** The transformation of the drug market in Tajikistan is evident not only in the shift towards recreational synthetic drug use and non-medical use of pharmaceuticals, but also in the increasing use of the Internet to purchase these substances in the country. These new dynamics raise the need to develop up-to-date and effective responses to address this emerging phenomenon and to protect the health and welfare of the population.
- **Changing patterns of use and profile of users.** The use of non-prescription medicines containing narcotic substances may attract a diverse group of users, different from drugs such as heroin. There is a high likelihood of an increase in use, especially among young people seeking different recreational experiences, belonging to social groups that differ from those identified so far, possibly in the middle and upper classes in Tajikistan. This situation demands a precise and targeted understanding in order to implement effective preventive measures in the country.
- **Tajikistan's geographical location presents significant challenges in addressing trafficking in illicit substances, especially opium derivatives.** Tajikistan is strategically located on a transit route used by drug traffickers that spans Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan. In addition, Tajikistan and its neighbouring countries are directly affected by drug distribution networks that aim to reach countries in Europe and other regions in the northern hemisphere. These geographical dynamics place Tajikistan in a crucial position to address the challenges posed by drug trafficking in the region.
- **HIV infection through unsafe drug use practices, among other reasons for infection.** In Tajikistan, each case of HIV transmission prompts us to reflect on the importance of adopting sound preventive approaches and promoting individual responsibility in making healthy choices. As we deepen our understanding of the factors that contribute to the spread of HIV and foster empathy and support for those affected, we can foster the development of a more aware, caring and empowered society. Uniting prevention efforts, providing comprehensive support and fostering a

deeper understanding of the issue is critical to making a significant impact on reducing HIV incidence in Tajikistan.

- **Trends and variations in seizures of drugs and psychotropic substances in Tajikistan.** During the period 2017-2021, seizures of various drugs and psychotropic substances were made in the country. These seizures can be classified into three main categories, depending on the percentage increase or decrease. First, there were seizures that experienced significant increases, such as amphetamines and the benzodiazepines diazepam and alprazolam, with increases of 101,660%, 3,125% and 994% respectively. In addition, increases of more than 1,000% were recorded for stimulants such as methamphetamines. In second place are seizures that showed a notable increase, such as heroin with an increase of approximately 129%, phenobarbital barbiturates with an increase of close to 50%, hashish with an increase of 25% and cannabis plants with an increase of 23%. Finally, seizures that decreased in intensity are identified as marijuana with a decrease of 80%, opium with a decrease of 50% and MDMA with a decrease of 22%. These seizures reflect the picture of drug trafficking and consumption in Tajikistan during the period mentioned above.
- **Significant changes in treatment for drug use and overdoses were recorded in treatment centres in Tajikistan.** Over the period 2016-2020, significant trends and variations have been observed in HIV testing and cases by sex in Tajikistan. In terms of decreases in order of intensity, an impressive 92% reduction in overdose cases stands out, followed by a 33% decrease in polydrug users and a 27% decrease in heroin users. In terms of increases, there was a 125% increase in hashish users. However, no significant changes have been observed in the number of opiate users or in the number of people treated for drug dependence during this period. These results reflect the evolution of the drug treatment landscape and overdose trends in Tajikistan over the years analysed.
- **Trends and variations in HIV testing and cases by sex in Tajikistan.** Over the period 2016-2020, significant trends and variations have been observed in HIV testing and cases disaggregated by sex in Tajikistan. Importantly, over the past five years there has been a remarkable 58% increase in HIV testing and a 47% reduction in the number of injecting drug users. However, despite these efforts, the number of HIV cases has doubled (50% increase) and the number of people living with the disease has increased by 56%.

6. Reflections as preliminary recommendations

In this section, we focus on addressing emerging challenges in the field of drugs in Tajikistan. In an ever-changing context, the country faces complex situations that require a review and adaptation of its existing policies. The change in consumption patterns, with an increase in the use of recreational drugs and medicines containing psychotropic substances, poses new problems and risks that need to be effectively addressed. The following are preliminary recommendations to address these challenges and promote a comprehensive and balanced approach to drug policy in Tajikistan.

It is important to note that these recommendations are preliminary and will be expanded and further elaborated in the future, once the «Regional Seminar on Building and Strengthening Balanced and Evidence-Based Drug Policies» has been held, and the specific actions undertaken by EU Member States that may be useful for Tajik institutions in this context have been analysed.

- **Align new anti-drug strategies with new emerging consumption patterns in** order to more accurately and adequately address the associated challenges and risks, thus promoting a comprehensive and up-to-date approach to tackling the drug phenomenon in the country.
- **Addressing new channels for buying drugs through cyber-security measures** with the aim of safeguarding the security of citizens and putting an end to these criminal activities in the digital sphere.
- **Improve and strengthen prevention measures to avoid HIV transmission** through a multidimensional approach.
- **Increase education and awareness-raising about the dangers associated with unsafe consumption practices**, while promoting access to information and resources for effective protection.
- **Strengthen regulations and controls on the sale and distribution of medicines** containing narcotic substances.
- **Comprehensively address the underlying causes of drug use** by effectively tackling the psychosocial, economic and health factors that contribute to the problem.
- **Conduct research and evaluation** of policies and programmes implemented.

7. Documentation consulted

7.1 Documentation used for the Systematisation Report

- Decree N° 585 of 2007 [President of the Republic of Tajikistan]. Single State Programme for the Prevention of Drug Abuse and Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking for the years 2008-2012. 30th November 2007.
- Decree N° 1409 of 2013 [President of the Republic of Tajikistan]. National Strategy for Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking in the Republic of Tajikistan 2013-2020. 13th February 2013.
- Decree N° 145 of 2021 [President of the Republic of Tajikistan]. National Drug Control Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period 2021-2030. 20th March 2021.
- Review of the status of anti-drug legislation of the Tajik Republic. [Internal document from CADAP 7 Tajikistan].
- UNODC (2022). Paris Country Fact Sheet. Republic of Tajikistan.

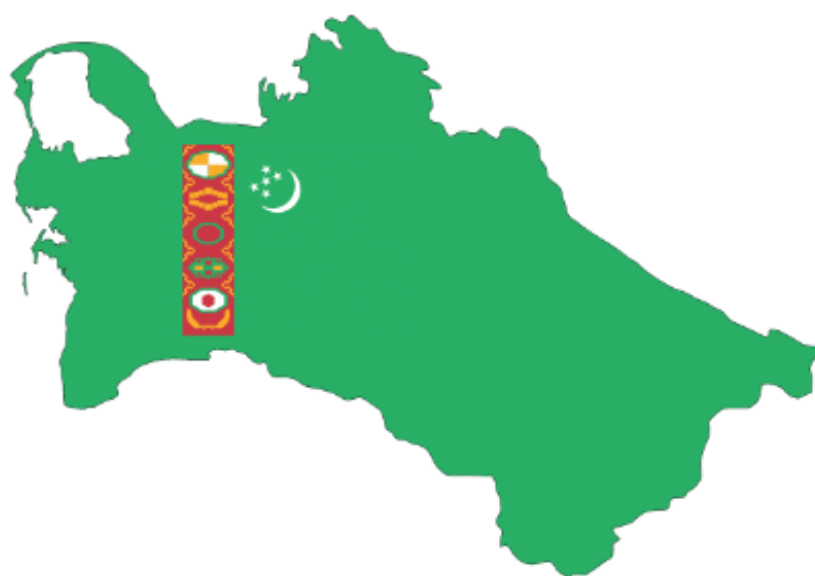
7.2 Documentation reviewed

- Code of Administrative Offences [CAO]. N° 1177 of 2008. 26th November 2008. (Republic of Tajikistan).
- Decree N° 421 of 2022 [President of the Republic of Tajikistan]. On the Lists of Strong and Poisonous Substances and the Large Quantity of Strong Substances. 26th August 2022.
- Law N° 873 of 1999. On the enactment of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan on Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors. 10th December 1999.
- Penal Code [PC]. N° 575 of 1998. 21st May 1998. (Republic of Tajikistan).
- Sanitary Code [SC]. N° 1413 of 2017. 30th May 2017. (Republic of Tajikistan).

Systematisation Report of the National Drug Policy

Dialogue in Turkmenistan

CADAP 7 – Component 1: Drug Policy



1. Introduction

This Systematization Report of the «National Drug Policy Dialogue» meeting presents an analysis of the context, the main findings, as well as some preliminary conclusions and recommendations on drug policy in Turkmenistan. All the analysis systematized here is based on active participation in the National Dialogue, along with a thorough analysis of available documentation. Specifically, the sources of analysis for this study are, in brief, the following:

- **Available documentation on drug policies in Turkmenistan.** Four documents covering legal-normative and analytical issues of the drug situation in the country have been analysed.
- **«National Dialogue on Drug Policy»,** which was attended by fifteen people from different ministries of the Turkmen Republic, Non-Governmental Organisations, representatives of the EU, as well as FIIAPP and CADAP representatives.

Episteme Social therefore conceived the National Dialogue as an opportunity to conduct a **comprehensive assessment of Turkmenistan's drug policy needs** according to the different stakeholders involved. The ultimate aim of these actions is to provide a needs analysis, which is reflected in this Systematisation Report.

In terms of the structure of this Systematisation Report for Turkmenistan, **we first present a review of the existing literature on drug policy**, highlighting the legal frameworks underpinning drug policy. **We then turn to the «National Drug Policy Dialogue» and explore the main issues raised during this event.** To conclude the analysis, **we present the most relevant aspects** derived from the review of both the existing literature and the discussions at the National Dialogue. Subsequently, **a series of conclusions are presented, accompanied by reflections that give rise to initial preliminary recommendations.**

2. Analysis of documentation

Within this section titled «Analysis of documentation», we delve into the state of drug legislation in Turkmenistan and examine the initiatives implemented by governmental bodies. Furthermore, we conduct an evaluation of the existing drug landscape within the nation to acquire a precise and contemporary understanding of the drug issue at hand.

2.1 Drug legislation in Turkmenistan

International legal instruments

Table 26 below presents the drug-related treaties to which Turkmenistan has ratified and acceded. These agreements are evidence of the strong and determined commitment of the government authorities in combating the challenges associated with drug use.

Table 26. Ratification of the International Drug Treaties in Turkmenistan³⁹

Treaty	State
Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961	21 February 1996 (Ratification)
Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971	21 February 1996 (Accession)
United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988	21 February 1996 (Accession)

National legal instruments⁴⁰

The government authorities of Turkmenistan have established a **rigorous legal framework** to address the drug problem and to combat the illicit trafficking, manufacture, storage and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The laws and regulations enacted seek to **deter drug-related activities and to protect the health and welfare of society at large.**

The legal provisions - both the Penal Code and the Code of Administrative Offences - **seek to strictly control and regulate all stages of the drug cycle, from manufacture and distribution to illicit cultivation and induced consumption.** The laws establish penalties and sanctions proportionate to the seriousness of the actions, whether as criminal offences or administrative infractions.

Of note is the inclusion of specific articles for medicinal products containing tramadol and other psychoactive substances, **indicating that concerns about drug abuse and trafficking in the country also extend to pharmaceutical substances leaving the legal circuit.**

³⁹ UNODC, 2022

⁴⁰ Review of drug legislation of Turkmenistan. [Internal document from CADAP 7 Turkmenistan]

Table 27 below provides a compilation of the National Plans and Programmes that have been implemented in recent years in Turkmenistan, as part of the country's sustained efforts to address various areas of development.

Table 27. National Programmes and Plans in Turkmenistan

Name of Programme/National Plan	Period
National Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings	2020-2022
National Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight against Terrorism	2020-2024
National Nutrition Programme	2020-2025
National Gender Equality Plan	2021-2025
National Programme for the Support and Development of Physical Culture and Sport	2021-2025

2.2 Drug policies in Turkmenistan⁴¹

Programmes implemented

In the context of the fight against the drug phenomenon, Turkmenistan's government authorities have consistently engaged in the implementation of programmes aimed at addressing the drug problem in a comprehensive and effective manner. The following are some of the outstanding programmes that have been successfully implemented in the field of drugs.

Table 28. Programmes implemented to address the impact of drugs in Turkmenistan

Programme	Description
«Family» Programme	<p>Objective: To address the harmful impact of drugs on society.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise awareness and educate families about the dangers of drug use. - Provide support and resources to prevent the onset of substance use.
Special Operation «Poppy»	<p>Objective: To combat the cultivation and production of narcotic plants throughout the country.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thorough inspection by law enforcement and military. - Includes remote and difficult to access areas, such as mountains and desert.

⁴¹ Review of drug policy of Turkmenistan. [Internal document from CADAP 7 Turkmenistan]

Legal instruments

In relation to legal instruments in drug policy, Law n° 654-V «**On narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, precursors and measures to counteract their illicit trafficking**» of 25 November 2017 establishes the legal basis for state policy in the control of trafficking in drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, as well as measures to combat their illicit trafficking. The objectives of the state policy on trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors are detailed below:

- **State regulation of illicit trafficking and consumption** of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors.
- **State control** over drug trafficking activities.
- **Licensing of activities** in the field of drug trafficking.
- **State register** of permitted narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- **Inter-institutional and intra-institutional coordination** of companies and related institutions.
- **Comprehensive solutions** to combat drug trafficking and illicit drug use.
- **Improving the work of agencies responsible for detecting and combating drug-related crime.**
- **Integrated activities for the prevention** and fight against drug dependence.
- Promotion of **healthy lifestyles**.
- **Involvement of NGOs, religious organisations and the people** in the fight against drug addiction and related crimes.
- **Strengthening international cooperation** in the control of drug trafficking and the implementation of measures to prevent drug trafficking and illicit use.

Key strategic points

The following are the key points of the policies implemented by Turkmenistan in its strategy to prevent drug use and trafficking:

- **Prioritise the health and well-being of the population**, focusing on promoting a healthy lifestyle and creating a negative attitude towards drug use.
- **Strengthening the work of health authorities, education and the media** in promoting drug prevention.
- **Implement adequate preventive measures** by improving the legal framework and the level of training of law enforcement officials.
- **Develop interregional and international cooperation** in the fight against drugs by participating in joint projects and programmes through international organisations.
- **Strengthening of border points and customs warehouses** with X-ray technology.
- **Conduct a large-scale operation to identify and eradicate** the illegal cultivation of plants used in the production of narcotics.

2.3 Drug situation in Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan faces a complex and challenging drug problem as it is in a strategic geographical position on the drug trafficking route from Afghanistan and other neighbouring areas that are affected by illicit drug production and trade. This situation poses several significant challenges for the Turkmen government, covering key aspects such as national security, public health and socio-economic development.

Main drugs seized in Turkmenistan

Table 29 provides information on illicit drug seizures in different years, broken down by drug type and quantity in kilograms, as well as the percentage of drugs seized in border territories in relation to total seizures.

Table 29. Illicit drug seizures in Turkmenistan in kilograms (2015-2020)

	2015	2016	Jan-Sep 2017	Jan-Sep 2020	Jan-Sep 2020
Heroin	0.71	0.95	0.01	0.003	-
Opium	243.28	293.42	243.7	110.5	92.8
Opium poppy	n/a	0.947	-	0.8	-
Marijuana (herb)	15.32	19.86	5.5	2.5	9.1
Hashish (resin)	0.008	5.38	0.016	0.2	-
Cannabis plants	n/a	0.947	n/a	-	-
Psychotropic substances	n/a	523 tablets	n/a	479 tablets, 6 ampoules, 8.7 g	887 tablets, 16 ampoules
Drugs seized on border territories (as % of total drug seizures)	100% (heroin and hashish)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: UNODC (2022)

- Overall, a **significant decrease in heroin seizures is observed over the years**, from 0.71 kg in 2015 to only 0.003 kg in January-September 2020.
- **Opium also shows a decreasing trend in seizures**, with a gradual decline from 243.28 kg in 2015 to 92.8 kg in January-September 2020.
- In contrast, **marijuana seizures have experienced variations over the years**, with a peak in 2016 at 19.86 kg and a drop to 2.5 kg in January-September 2020, followed by an increase to 9.1 kg in the same period.
- Overall seizures of psychotropic substances **show a significant increase in the quantity and variety of drugs seized**, from 523 tablets in 2016 to 887 tablets and 16 poppies in January-September 2020.

Drug-related crime in Turkmenistan

Table 30 provides information on drug-related and other crimes in different years, including criminal cases initiated and the rate per 100,000 inhabitants. It also shows the breakdown of offences, specifying the percentage of cases with intent to sell and drug smuggling. The most relevant data on drug-related and other crimes in Turkmenistan are highlighted below.

Table 30. Drug-related and other crimes in Turkmenistan (2015-2020)

Drug-Related and Other Crimes	2015	2016	Jan-Sep 2017	Jan-Sep 2019	Jan-Sep 2020
Criminal cases initiated	723	664	419	425	347
Rate (per 100,000) *	13	12	n/a	n/a	n/a
With intent to sell (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	68%	77%
Smuggling (%)	15%	15%	n/a	11%	11%

Source: UNODC (2022)

- **A steady decrease in the number of criminal cases initiated** is observed from 2015 to September 2020.
 - Notable is the significant increase in the percentage of cases with intent to sell, **from 68% in January-September 2017 to 77% in the same period in 2020.**
- In terms of drug smuggling, **some stability is observed with a constant percentage of 15% in 2015 and 2016, followed by a slight decrease to 11% in January-September 2020.**

3. National Drug Policy Dialogue in Turkmenistan

3.1 Stakeholders involved in the National Dialogue on Drug Policy

The National Drug Policy Dialogue in Turkmenistan took place on 31st March 2023 in the city of Ashgabat, adopting a hybrid format combining face-to-face and virtual participation. This event was attended by important stakeholders, including government partners such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the State Committee on Physical Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry and the Makhtumkuli Youth Organisation, as well as the EU Delegation to Turkmenistan and the CADAP team.

The table below shows in detail all the institutions who attended the National Drug Policy Dialogue in the Republic of Turkmenistan.

Table 31. Attendees at the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Turkmenistan

	Institution
European Union	Delegation of the EU to the Turkmen Republic
	Delegation of the EU to the Kyrgyz Republic
	FIIAPP
Republic of Turkmenistan	MIA
	MFA
	MHMI
	ME
	State Committee on Physical Culture and Sports
	Youth Organisation «Makhtumkuli»

The event was attended by leading international experts in the field of drug policy, all of them linked to the CADAP team. Among them were PhD. David Pere Martínez Oró (Episteme Social), PhD. Ricard Faura (Episteme Social), Mr. Roger Cáceres (Episteme Social), and PhD. Viktor Mravčík (Podané Ruce).

3.2 Main issues emerging

Several points emerged during the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Turkmenistan, including the following:

1. The Turkmenistan government's efforts **to combat drug trafficking and consumption within the country** are highlighted, thus contributing to regional stability in general.

2. It specifies that **drug trafficking and abuse remain one of the greatest development challenges in the world** and underlines the importance of the potential and prospects for cooperation between CADAP and Turkmenistan.
3. It reflects the commitment of the EU and its partners in the region to support the **implementation of effective evidence-based drug policies** and comprehensive approaches to tackling the drug problem.
4. In view of the emergence of NPS, the possibility of **organising visits abroad and studying specialised equipment in laboratories in European countries** that can detect these substances is suggested.
5. The importance of **promoting a healthy lifestyle** in Turkmenistan and the preventive benefits this brings is mentioned.
6. It identifies the **promotion of a healthy lifestyle among young people** as a state priority and expresses the wish to receive **specific measures from youth organisations** in Europe to carry out educational and propaganda activities to inform young people about the harmful effects of drugs.

3.3 Analysis of concerns emerging from the National Dialogue

Analysis of drug-related findings in Turkmenistan is crucial to understanding the current picture. By collecting information in this field, it is possible to identify some of the government's objectives and the extent to which they have been achieved, especially in the area of drug supply and demand reduction in the country. At this point it is important to note that the analysis has been carried out exclusively on the basis of the National Drug Policy Dialogue and documentation provided by the government parties consulted, which are the only ones available.

- **Lack of data in annual records.** The fact that not all data on key issues – such as drugs seized in border territories or drug-related crime – are recorded annually limits the ability to analyse what is happening in the country, as it is crucial to understand in detail what the specific trends are in each field. In this sense, a precise comparison of these intermediate periods is not possible, and therefore trends cannot be analysed.
- **Increase in drug seizures.** Although an increase in seizures of psychotropic substances is detected, their relative weight is not very significant. Similarly, although seizures of marijuana and hashish show some fluctuation, the trend seems to be downward. The problem in terms of volume is seen to a greater extent in opium seizures, yet these have been declining significantly from 2015 to 2020. The sharpness of this reduction seems to indicate that government efforts to reduce supply and combat production and trafficking in the region are proving highly effective, as can be seen from the data collected.
- **Decline in drug-related crime.** In any case, from the available data it is possible to highlight a steady decline in the number of criminal cases in recent years, indicating a possible downward trend in criminal activity related to drugs and other crimes. The same is true in the case of drug smuggling, where although missing data for the intervening years make it difficult to make an accurate assessment, everything seems to suggest that year after year there is a more effective control of drug smuggling activities in Turkmenistan.

- **Efforts to eliminate the retail drug network.** The country has set out to eliminate the retail network of drug sales, reflecting the country's political will to combat trafficking and consumption of illegal substances, as well as an understanding that the fight against drugs requires tackling the points of sale and consumption at the local level. Strong actions on supply reduction have been accompanied by actions aimed at discouraging the demand associated with the consumption of illicit substances.
- **Aim to eradicate tobacco use.** For the next few years, the government of Turkmenistan has set itself the goal of eliminating tobacco from Turkmen society. This shows a comprehensive supply and demand reduction approach to drug policy that is not limited to illicit drugs alone, but also addresses the health problems associated with tobacco use.
- **Absence of drug trafficking offences on the World Wide Web.** Although the internet connection rate in Turkmenistan is relatively low (21.3%)⁴², it is remarkable how much effort Turkmenistan is making to eliminate drug trafficking through this channel. The country has understood the changes taking place globally in drug trade patterns and the need to address the challenges posed by online drug sales. In this regard, the need for international cooperation and the importance of working in partnership with other countries and international agencies to combat cyber-drug trafficking is highlighted here.

⁴² Internet access in Turkmenistan (2019)

4. Conclusions

- **Turkmenistan's geographical location poses significant challenges in the fight against drug trafficking.** Being located on a transit route for drug trafficking between Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, as well as the region, is in the middle of drug distribution routes targeting countries in Europe and other regions of the Global North.
- **The government of Turkmenistan plays an active role in international cooperation and participation in international conventions and agreements on drugs.** The government has been strengthening relations with organisations such as UNODC to receive support in terms of training, information exchange and technical assistance.
- **Turkmenistan's drug policies show great effectiveness in their emphasis on drug supply and demand reduction.** The Turkmen government has been emphatic in the fight against drugs, especially regarding supply and demand reduction. In these fields, the results of the data provided show exceptional effectiveness.

5. Reflections as preliminary recommendations

Like many other countries in the region, Turkmenistan has faced significant challenges related to the drug phenomenon, including drug production, trafficking, and consumption. To address these challenges, there are a few actions that can contribute to improving drug policies in the country. Some of these are presented below:

- **Strengthen drug prevention and education.**
- **Implement treatment and harm reduction programmes** through a holistic approach.
- Actively promote **international cooperation and maintain ongoing collaboration with other countries in the region.**
- **Conduct research and evaluation** of policies and programmes implemented.
- **Explore alternatives to sentencing** in the context of drug policy.
- **Promote greater openness in the dissemination of information** on measures taken and results achieved in the fight against drugs.
- **Implement a comprehensive drug strategy** that addresses the underlying causes of this complex problem.

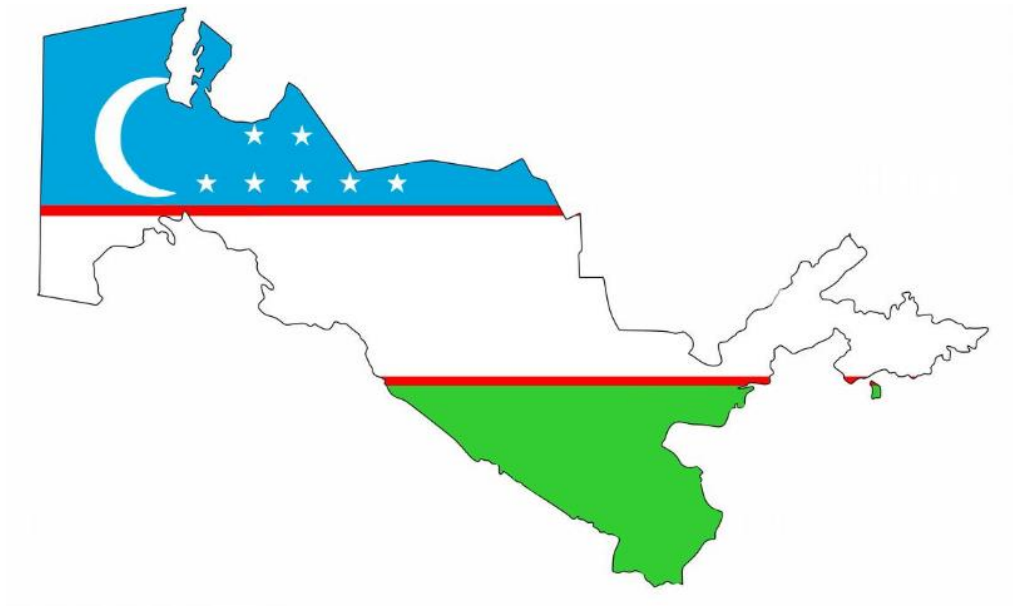
6. Documentation consulted

- Review of drug policy of Turkmenistan. [Internal document from CADAP 7 Turkmenistan]
- Review of drug legislation of Turkmenistan. [Internal document from CADAP 7 Turkmenistan]
- UNODC (2022). Paris Country Fact Sheet. Republic of Turkmenistan.
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Systematisation Report of the National Drug Policy

Dialogue in Uzbekistan

CADAP 7 – Component 1: Drug Policy



1. Introduction

The Systematisation Report of the «National Drug Policy Dialogue» event in Uzbekistan provides a comprehensive analysis of the background, findings and preliminary recommendations related to drug policy in the country. This analysis is based on active participation in the National Dialogue, as well as a review of relevant documentation. In addition, a needs assessment questionnaire was administered and in-depth individual and group interviews were conducted with selected participants of the event. Various sources were used to carry out this analysis, which are summarised below.

- **Available documentation on drug policy in Uzbekistan.** Seventeen documents covering legal-normative and analytical issues of the drug situation in the country have been analysed.
- **«National Drug Policy Dialogue»**, attended by ten people from different ministries of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Non-Governmental Organisations, representatives of the EU and International Organisations, as well as representatives of FIIAPP and CADAP.
- **Semi-structured in-depth interviews.** To complement and deepen some of the issues raised in the National Dialogue, interviews were conducted with six of the people who had attended the meeting during the months of June and July 2023.
- **Needs assessment questionnaire**, which was sent to all institutions represented in the National Dialogue and was answered by six representatives of these institutions during the months of June and July 2023.

Episteme Social conceived the National Dialogue in Uzbekistan as a valuable initiative aimed at conducting a **comprehensive assessment of the country's drug policy needs**. The main objective of this initiative is to take into account the perspectives and opinions of all stakeholders. The main purpose of this meeting is to **address in detail the needs identified in the field of drug policy** in Uzbekistan.

In terms of the structure of this Systematisation Report for Uzbekistan, a **comprehensive analysis of the existing drug policy literature in the country is undertaken first**, examining the legal basis for drug policy in the country. It then **details the process of the «National Drug Policy Dialogue»** and addresses the main issues that emerged during the event. This is followed by a **comprehensive analysis of the interviews** conducted with selected participants of the National Dialogue. The **most relevant aspects of the needs assessment questionnaire** that was distributed to all the institutions present at the meeting are then presented. Once this detailed analysis has been completed, **a series of conclusions and reflections are presented, leading to the first preliminary recommendations**.

2. Analysis of documentation

In this section of «Analysis of documentation», a review of the drug legislation situation in Uzbekistan and the programmes implemented by the governmental authorities in this field is carried out. In addition, a comprehensive analysis of the current drug situation in the country is carried out in order to obtain an accurate and up-to-date picture of the drug phenomenon.

2.1 Drug legislation in Uzbekistan

International legal instruments

The drug-related treaties to which Uzbekistan has acceded are presented in Table 32 below. These treaties reflect Uzbekistan's strong commitment to combating drug-related problems by establishing an internationally recognised legal and policy framework to address this global challenge.

Table 32. Ratification of drug-related international treaties in Uzbekistan⁴³

Treaty	State
Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961	24 August 1995 (Accession)
Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971	12 July 1995 (Accession)
United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988	24 August 1995 (Accession)

National legal instruments⁴⁴

Uzbekistan's government authorities have taken significant steps to address complex drug-related problems, adopting comprehensive legislation and putting in place a variety of complementary mechanisms. In order to comprehensively address these challenges, the country has established **a comprehensive policy framework ranging from prevention and treatment to control and combating drug trafficking.**

In addition, Uzbekistan has worked to **promote cooperation and coordination between multiple stakeholders**, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, health professionals, law enforcement agencies and the wider community. This broad involvement has been carried out at different levels, both locally and nationally, with the aim of **ensuring a comprehensive and effective response to the drug problem.**

⁴³ UNODC, 2022

⁴⁴ Boltaev, A. (2022)

2.2 Drug policies in Uzbekistan

Strategy 2011-2015 / Strategy 2016-2020

In 1994, the Uzbek government authorities initiated the creation of a national drug strategy. In that year, the State Commission on Drugs and the National Centre for Drug Information and Analysis were established as its executive office under the Cabinet of Ministers.

- In June 2011, the «**Programme of integrated measures to counter drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking for 2011-2015**» was adopted, with the aim of implementing integrated measures and improving drug medical care.
- Subsequently, in 2016, the «**Anti-Drug Programme 2016-2020**» was approved, consisting of six major sections, which included organisational and legal measures against drug abuse and illicit trafficking, as well as the fight against illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors. In addition, the medico-social aspects of drug abuse were addressed, prevention and awareness-raising measures were established, and the legal framework and international cooperation were strengthened.

Table 33 below specifies the main goals and approaches of the two previous anti-drug strategies that were approved by the Government of Uzbekistan:

Table 33. Drug control programmes in Uzbekistan⁴⁵

Programme 2011-2015	Programme 2016-2020
Improving measures against illicit trafficking in drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors	Improving inter-agency coordination and cooperation
Strengthening resources and capacities in tackling the drug phenomenon, together with prevention and treatment	Reducing drug-related crime
Controlling the prevalence and illegal use of drugs in Uzbekistan	Raising public awareness about drug abuse
Modernising and developing drug assistance with modern technologies	Improving the quality of research and legal practices
Improving the monitoring of the proliferation of drug use	Optimising drug dependence treatment
Conducting targeted campaigns to prevent the spread of drugs and related crimes	Improving law enforcement and the legal framework
Improving international and inter-agency cooperation in tackling the drug phenomenon	Improving capacity for drug market analysis

⁴⁵ <http://m.ncdc.uz/ru/>

Improve legislation for effective implementation of drug treatment and medical prevention programmes.	Improve the technical and human capacity of forensic and epidemiological laboratories.
	Improving the medico-social rehabilitation of drug addicts
	Addressing the spread of NPS
	Improving the data monitoring and analysis system

Drug strategy 2021-2025⁴⁶

The Plan for Combating Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking for the period 2021-2025, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan, reflects a comprehensive and strategic approach to tackling the drug problem in the country. This programme, consisting of a total of 41 actions, **provides a clear vision of the Uzbek government's priorities and objectives in tackling drug abuse and drug trafficking.** Table 34 below shows the organisational structure in which the actions envisaged in the Plan are included.

Table 34. Organisational structure of Uzbekistan's 2021-2025 Plan

Plan for the fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking for 2021-2025
Organisational measures to tackle drug addiction and drug trafficking
Improving tackling illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors
Medical and Social Aspects of Addressing Drug Abuse
Strengthening the drug abuse prevention system and promoting an anti-narcotics approach
Improvement of legislation in the field of control of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors and regulation of the narcology service.
Enhancing international cooperation in tackling drug trafficking and abuse

In this regard, it is important to highlight the following key aspects of the actions included in the Plan for the period 2021-2025:

- **Strong commitment by government authorities to adopt measures based on scientific evidence and international best practice** and adapted to the specific country context.
- **Improved capacity for cooperation between different Uzbek government agencies and ministries** to take the necessary measures through inter-governmental collaboration.

⁴⁶ Protocol N° 1 of the State Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Drug Control

- **Conducting scientific research in the field of narcology** in the priority directions of prevention, diagnosis and treatment of drug-related diseases.
- **Explicit commitment to adopt and bring their national legislation in line with the legislative standards** set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

2.3 Drug prevention in Uzbekistan's government strategy⁴⁷

The government of Uzbekistan has made significant efforts to prevent drug use, implementing a range of preventive measures in different regions of the country. Measures taken include **raising awareness, promoting healthy lifestyles, holding sports and cultural events, and collaborating with various state and public organisations.**

In particular, the government of **Uzbekistan has implemented a drug prevention strategy with a wide range of activities.** More than 13,000 events and collaborations with different ministries and agencies have taken place, providing healthy alternatives and entertainment for young people.

2.4 Drug monitoring and evaluation system in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, information on drugs falls into two main categories:

- **Data on drug supply reduction**, which are managed by law enforcement agencies such as the Ministry of the Interior, the State Security Service, the State Customs Committee and the Prosecutor General's Office.
- **Data on drug demand reduction**, which is managed by the Ministry of Health.

2.5 Drug situation in Uzbekistan

Drug-related crimes are complex phenomena that affect various societies around the world. These problems are associated with the production, distribution and consumption of narcotic and psychotropic substances, and have implications for public health, security and social order. Drug abuse and involvement in drug-related criminal activities represent **significant challenges for governments, institutions and communities** in their efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of this phenomenon.

Key factors in the current drug situation in Uzbekistan

In the context of Uzbekistan, the following factors are identified as influencing the drug situation in the country.

- The **continuous and increasing flow of drugs from Afghanistan**, including opiates and cannabinoids.
- The **emergence of new psychoactive and synthetic substances**, and the challenge of new smuggling of synthetic and potent drugs.

⁴⁷ Law ZRU-644.

- The use of the Internet and postal services as a new channel for the distribution and sale of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- The promotion of these synthetic drugs and other potent substances through new channels; traffickers and distributors employ various strategies to attract users and increase demand for these substances, further aggravating the situation.
- Favourable agroclimatic conditions in Uzbekistan for in situ drug production.
- The increase in drug manufacture in domestic settings.

Current measures to combat drug trafficking in Uzbekistan

The Uzbek authorities have implemented a number of measures to address the problems associated with drug use. The following actions stand out:

- Identification and elimination of the main channels for the transit and sale of drugs of foreign and local origin.
- Coordination and organisation of comprehensive operational and preventive measures to reduce the supply of narcotic drugs, their analogues, psychotropic and potent substances.
- Strengthening international cooperation in this field.

Distribution of consumption by provinces and cities in Uzbekistan

Table 35 shows the distribution of psychoactive substance use in different provinces and cities in Uzbekistan, revealing patterns over the period analysed. The most relevant aspects and trends observed in these data are discussed below.

Table 35. Distribution of psychoactive substance use by province and city in Uzbekistan (2022)⁴⁸

Psychoactive substance	Province / City	Percentage of cases (%)
Desomorphine	Province of Navoi	71
	Bukhara Province	19.6
	Province of Fergara	8.1
Tramadol	City of Tashkent	64.1
	Province of Fergara	21.7
Synthetic cannabinoids	City of Tashkent	100
Synthetic cathinones	City of Tashkent	100

- Regarding Desomorphine usage in Uzbekistan, 71% of the reported cases have been notified in the province of Navoi, 19.6% in the province of Bukhara, and 8.1% in the province of Fergana.

⁴⁸ Internal document from CADAP 7 Uzbekistan

- Among all the reported cases of **Tramadol misuse** in the country, **64.1% occur in the city of Tashkent**. Tramadol usage is also observed in the **province of Fergana, albeit in a significantly lower proportion, accounting for 21.7%**.
- For the reported cases of synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones usage, **100% of the cases have been notified in the city of Tashkent**.

Drug-related crime in Uzbekistan

This section analyses drug-related crime in Uzbekistan, examining trends and changes that have been observed in recent years. Available quantitative data are explored, addressing aspects such as drug trafficking, illicit cultivation and other related crimes. The aim is to obtain a clear understanding of the current situation and variations in the incidence of these crimes over time. This analysis makes it possible to assess the effectiveness of policies and measures implemented in Uzbekistan and to highlight challenges and opportunities for the fight against drug-related crime in the country.

Table 36. Drug-related offences according to the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan (2017-2021)

Type of offence	2017	2018	2019	2020	Jan-June 2021	% change (2017 - 2021)
In order to sell⁴⁹	2,233	1,626	1,701	1,814	974	-12.76
Smuggling⁵⁰	553	266	395	304	209	-24.41
Illicit cultivation⁵¹	1,142	1,238	1,064	1,521	825	+44.48
Other offences⁵²	1,406	1,649	2,496	2,344	1,227	+74.54
Total	5,429	4,779	5,026	6,032	3,235	+19.17

Source: UNODC (2022)

Table 36 shows the main trends related to drug offences in two different time periods. The main variations and the most relevant aspects to be highlighted are set out below:

- During the reporting period, **a positive trend has been observed in the drug-related crime situation** in Uzbekistan. Overall, **the total number of crimes has significantly increased by 19.17%**.
- One of the highlights is the **notable reduction in the crime of smuggling, which has experienced a negative variation of 24.41%**.

⁴⁹ Illegal production, purchase, storage and other activities related to narcotic and psychotropic substances for the purpose of sale (Art. 273).

⁵⁰ Smuggling, including smuggling of narcotic or psychotropic substances (Art.246).

⁵¹ Cultivation of prohibited plants (Art. 270).

⁵² Illegal occupation of narcotic or psychotropic substances (Art. 271); participation in the consumption of narcotic or psychotropic substances (Art. 274); infringement of regulations on production or treatment of narcotic or psychotropic substances (Art. 275); production, purchase, storage and other activities with narcotic and psychotropic substances without the purpose of sale (Art. 276).

- Similarly, the **crime of illegal production, purchase, storage and other activities** related to narcotic and psychotropic substances **for the purpose of sale** has also shown a **percentage decrease of 12.76%**.
- Despite the downward trend in most crimes, **an increase in Other drug-related crimes** has been **observed by 74.54%**.
- Finally, **an increase in illicit cultivation** has been observed, with a **percentage increase of 44.48%**.
- It should be noted that the percentage change has been calculated taking into account the data for the first and last year, **making an estimate of what might have happened in the remaining three months of the year**, for which data are not available.

Main drugs seized in Uzbekistan

Table 37. Seizures of illicit drugs, precursors and other substances in kilograms (2017-2021) in Uzbekistan

Substance	2017	2018	2019	2020	Jan-Sep 2021	% change (2017-2021)
Heroin	12.43	20.6	40.94	28.31	98.68	+958.49
Opium	797.95	254.68	224.62	124.13	199.74	-66.62
Poppy straw	188.21	226.97	62.85	323.91	75.14	-46.77
Tramadol	n/a	7.55	23.82	21.14	n/a	-
Pregabalin	n/a	n/a	15.803	150.735	n/a	-
Marijuana	916.60	600.80	736.41	692.80	522.35	-24.02
Hashish	78.54	61.38	111.64	223.84	245.03	+315.97
Hashish oil	-	-	-	0.127	0.0021	-
Cocaine salts	n/a	0.0098	-	0.279	0.015	-
MDMA	n/a	-	-	0.07	n/a	-
Methamphetamine	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.009	-	-
Mephedrone	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.15	n/a	-

LSD	0.0013	n/a	-	-	-	-
NPS	0.361	0.165	0.194	1.229	0.0079	-97.08
Psychotropic substances (grams)	524	258	532	3,824	n/a	+629.77
Total	2,218.14	1,430.08	1,747.08	5,839.54	1,146.95	-31.06

Source: UNODC (2022)

Table 37 reflects trends and significant changes in seizures of different types of drugs during the period under review in Uzbekistan. The main patterns and relevant aspects emerging from these data are highlighted below:

- Overall, a decrease of 31.06% in total seizures of illicit drugs, precursors and other substances was observed in Uzbekistan during the reporting period.
- Heroin seizures have seen a significant increase from 12.43 kg in 2017 to 98.68 kg in the first nine months of 2021, an increase of 958.49%. On the other hand, opium has seen a reduction of 66.62%, from 797.95 kg in 2017 to 199.74 kg in 2021, while poppy straw has decreased by 46.77%, from 188.21 kg in 2017 to 75.14 kg in 2021.
- In relation to marijuana, a decrease of 24.02% has been observed in the quantity seized, from 916.60 kg in 2017 to 522.35 kg in 2021. In contrast, the seizure of hashish has seen a significant increase of 315.97%, from 78.54 kg in 2017 to 245.03 kg in 2021.
- Also, the seizure of psychotropic substances has shown a significant increase of 629.77%, from 524 g in 2017 to 3,824 g in 2021.
- It is important to note that the table provided is missing data to analyse changes in some psychoactive substances, such as tramadol, pregabalin, MDMA and methamphetamine. These data gaps limit our ability to comprehensively assess changes in seizures of these substances over the period analysed.
- The percentage change has been calculated taking into account the data for the first and last year, making an estimate of what might have happened in the second half of the year, for which data are not available.

HIV status in Uzbekistan

In this section, we explore the assessment of the HIV situation in Uzbekistan, analysing different aspects related to this challenge. HIV remains a major public health issue in the country, and a thorough understanding of the current situation is essential to implement effective prevention, diagnosis and treatment strategies. Through this analysis, we gain a comprehensive and detailed perspective of the reality of HIV in Uzbekistan, allowing us to identify the priority areas of intervention needed to control the spread of the disease and improve the quality of life of those affected.

Table 38. Trends and changes in HIV testing and cases by sex and mode of transmission in Uzbekistan (2016-2019)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	% change 2016 - 2019
Tested for HIV	2,660	n/a	3,238,398	3,460,502	-
New HIV cases	3,983	4,025	4,060	3,983	-
Male (%)	55	57	57	58	+5.45
Female (%)	45	43	43	42	-6.67
Sexual (%)	69.8	71.3	72.9	73.2	+4.87
Parenteral (%)	21.8	20.3	17.5	18.2	-16.51
Mother-to-child (%)	0.2	0.3	0.1	1.3	+550
Others (%)	8.2	8.1	9.5	7.3	-10.98
Total PLWH	35,386	37,872	40,376	42,425	+19.89

Source: UNODC (2022)

- **The proportion of males among new HIV cases has shown an increase of 5.45%**, from 55% in 2016 to 58% in 2019. On the other hand, **a decrease of 6.67% is observed in the proportion of females among new HIV cases**, from 45% in 2016 to 42% in 2019.
- **An increase of 4.87% is observed in cases of sexual transmission of HIV**, increasing from 69.8% in 2016 to 73.2% in 2019. On the other hand, there is a **16.51% decrease in parenteral transmission**, from 21.8% in 2016 to 18.2% in 2019. **It is important to highlight a significant increase of 550% in cases of mother-to-child transmission**, from 0.2% in 2016 to 1.3% in 2019.
- In terms of other routes of transmission, there is a **10.98% decrease in the proportion of cases classified as «Other»**, from 8.2% in 2016 to 7.3% in 2019.
- **The total number of PLWH has shown an increase of 19.89%** from 35,386 in 2016 to 42,425 in 2019.

Drug impact: analysis of drug use, treatment and consequences

This section focuses on analysing key indicators related to drug use and its effects in Uzbekistan. Through this review, it explores relevant data and statistics that provide a deeper understanding of the current situation in the country.

Table 39. Key indicators related to drug use and its effects in Uzbekistan

Scope	Data
Injecting drug use	The number of injecting drug users increased to 403 in 2022 , compared to 359 in the previous year.
Referral rate of drug addicts to treatment	In 2021, there was an increase in the number of people receiving specialised treatment in the country's narcological centres, reaching 2,711 patients. Of these patients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 82.9% received inpatient treatment. ▪ 17.1% were treated on an outpatient basis.
Drug-related infectious diseases	According to data from the Republican AIDS Centre, 3,889 new cases of HIV infection were detected in the country, of which 2.1% were among injecting drug users. In total, 47,672 people were registered as HIV-positive, 8.85% of whom were drug users.
Substance-related intoxications	In 2022, specialised medical assistance was provided to 882 people for acute intoxication with psychoactive substances. Of these cases, 5 were related to opiates , while the remaining cases were related to the use of drugs with psychoactive effects.
Drug-related deaths and fatalities	During the last six years, no fatal cases of drug overdose have been recorded in the country. In 2022, 88 persons were removed from the dispensary register of narcotic institutions due to death, representing 1.6% of the total number of registered patients.

3. National Drug Policy Dialogue in Uzbekistan

3.1 Stakeholders involved in the National Drug Policy Dialogue

On 11th May 2023, Uzbekistan became the venue for a major CADAP 7 event: the National Drug Policy Dialogue. In the city of Tashkent, drug policy leaders and decision-makers gathered to discuss and share perspectives on how to address drug-related challenges in the country.

This initiative brought together various stakeholders, including government representatives such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Centre for Drug Control, the Republican Information and Education Centre «Intilish» and the Charitable Public Fund «Mahalla», as well as the Delegation of the EU to Uzbekistan and CADAP itself. During the meeting, a wide range of issues were addressed, focusing on the formulation of effective policies and innovative solutions in the field of drugs.

Table 40 lists the institutions that attended the National Dialogue in Uzbekistan. The list is an important reference for understanding who participated in the discussions related to drug policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Table 40. Attendees at the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Uzbekistan

	Institution
European Union	Delegation of the EU to the Uzbek Republic
	FIIAPP
Republic of Uzbekistan	MIA
	NIACDC
	RSSPMCN
	Republican Information and Education Centre «Intilish».
	Charitable Public Fund «Mahalla»
International organisation	UNODC

As part of the CADAP international team, the following drug policy experts also joined the event: Ph.D. David Pere Martínez Oró (Episteme Social), Ph.D. Ricard Faura (Episteme Social), Mr. Roger Cáceres (Episteme Social), and Ms. Marisa Perelló (Podané Ruce).

3.2 Main issues emerging from the National Dialogue

During the National Drug Policy Dialogue in Uzbekistan, a number of salient issues emerged that are worth highlighting, including the following:

1. It highlights **the worrying growth in the use of online technologies for the trade and use of drugs**, as well as the increase in potent narcotics.
2. It highlights the continued and **increased flow of opioids and cannabinoids, as well as the proliferation of synthetic narcotics and favourable climatic conditions** to produce narcotic substances.
3. **More than 6,000 sports and entertainment events** are reported to have reached more than 12 million people from different population groups, including young people.
4. Emphasis is placed on the **growing presence of amphetamines in Uzbekistan**, with more than 15 kg of synthetic drugs seized in 2022, including amphetamine, LSD and MDMA.
5. It highlights the **increase in the sale of drugs on the Darknet and the use of web technologies by criminal circles**, taking advantage of anonymity and the use of cryptocurrencies and e-wallets, and **raises the need to strengthen the fight against the distribution of drugs over the Internet**.
6. **The increase in demand for medicines containing psychotropic substances** sold in pharmacies is noteworthy.

3.3 Analysis of the concerns that emerged from the National Dialogue

A comprehensive analysis of drug-related findings is essential to gain a clear understanding of the current situation in the country. By gathering information in this area, it is possible to identify the targets set by the government and assess the extent to which they are being met. It should be noted that this analysis has been carried out exclusively on the basis of the National Dialogue and documentation provided by Uzbek counterparts.

- **Growing concern about New Psychoactive Substances.** Throughout Central Asia, a boom in NPS has been witnessed as a result of a changing pattern of drug use. In the case of Uzbekistan, available data indicate that NPS may not yet have developed to the same extent as in other countries in the region, but the authorities want to be prepared for the emergence of this new phenomenon. The Uzbek authorities are therefore preparing to study this phenomenon, adapting and updating their strategies and policies in order to safeguard the health and well-being of the population.
- **Decline in drug-related crime.** In Uzbekistan, consistent decreases in crime rates have been observed in recent years, which could suggest a possible downward trend in drug-related and other criminal activity. However, the authorities are aware that it is important to be cautious and to carefully analyse medium and long-term trends before reaching definitive conclusions. In general, the effectiveness of measures implemented to combat drug-related crime is perceived to be progressively strengthening. It is crucial to continue monitoring and adapting strategies to address this challenge and ensure the security and well-being of the population in Uzbekistan.
- **Positive and negative variations in seizures of illicit substances.** These changes reflect ongoing efforts to combat drug trafficking and address the illicit drug problem in the region. In terms of

positive changes, Uzbek law enforcement agencies have improved their ability to detect and stop drug-related activities, leading to an increase in the amount of drugs seized. However, there are also negative variations in drug seizures in Uzbekistan. Despite the efforts made, the country still faces significant challenges in the fight against drug trafficking. However, it should be noted that there is a lack of available data on seizures of different drugs for different years, which makes it difficult to fully analyse the situation.

- **Increase in new HIV cases in the country.** During the period from 2016 to 2019, Uzbekistan has faced an increase in new HIV cases. This situation is of concern to authorities and health professionals alike, as it presents a significant challenge to the prevention and control of the disease. Over the years, a steady increase in HIV incidence has been observed in the country, highlighting the urgent need for a stronger and more effective response by health systems and public policies. Strong and effective measures to address the problem and protect the health of the Uzbek population are essential.
- **Increased use of medicines containing psychoactive substances.** The abuse of medicines carries the risk of dependence and addiction, which can further aggravate the health and well-being problems of the individuals concerned. This trend poses significant public health challenges and requires an urgent response from authorities and health professionals.
- **Emergence of new drug sales channels in the country.** In recent times, an increase in drug sales channels has emerged in the country, taking advantage of the facilities offered by the Internet. This situation implies a change in the dynamics of the drug market, as a virtual environment has been created that is conducive to the illegal trade in drugs. The use of online platforms and postal services allows traffickers to conceal and transport drugs more discreetly and anonymously. This presents an additional challenge for authorities, as detection and control of these illicit transactions becomes more difficult.
- **Availability of own raw materials for illicit drug manufacture.** The availability of raw materials in the country creates conditions conducive to the illegal production of drugs, which in turn drives the increase in supply on the market. The accessibility of these raw materials becomes a crucial factor for the operation of clandestine laboratories, where illicit substances are manufactured. Easy access to these resources provides a solid base for the production and distribution of drugs locally and internationally.

4. What do the interviews and the questionnaire tell us?

4.1 Analysis of the interviews

In this section, we delve into an in-depth analysis of the interviews conducted, including both individual and group interviews with different participants representing various governmental institutions in Uzbekistan. Through these valuable interactions, we have had the invaluable opportunity to **explore the experiences, opinions and knowledge of key individuals in relation to drug policy in the country.**

Each individual interview has been conducted with great care, providing a safe and welcoming space for participants to share their thoughts and reflections in a candid manner. In addition, the group interviews provided an opportunity to foster dialogue between representatives of different government institutions, further enriching the exchange of ideas.

We have gathered a wide range of voices, covering different profiles, backgrounds and points of view, **which has given us a comprehensive and enriching view of the issue at hand, as well as a more holistic understanding of drug policies in the country.**

Our primary objective is to **draw meaningful and relevant conclusions from these testimonies** in order to gain a deeper understanding of the current drug-related situation in Uzbekistan. In the following, we present the highlights we have obtained from the individual and group interviews, which allow us to gain a clearer and more detailed perspective of the reality we are facing.

Positive aspects of drug policies highlighted in interviews

- **The improvement of the legislative framework related to the prevention and treatment of drug-related diseases is highlighted.**
- It highlights **the adoption of presidential resolutions to improve and implement narcology services in the country**, including training of personnel and improving the availability of equipment.
- **The adoption of specific sectoral programmes** aimed at implementing drug-related activities is mentioned.
- Emphasis is placed on **large-scale work with the population**, especially in the systemic approach to prevention.
- **The establishment of inter-agency mobile groups for the coordination of operations** is noteworthy, which has contributed to improvements in international cooperation.
- It highlights **the implementation of more than 60.000 awareness-raising events** reaching 12 million people.
- Emphasis is placed on **strengthening staff training and improving equipment availability.**
- **The promotion of drug education, public awareness and healthy lifestyles** through specific programmes and events is highlighted.
- **Ongoing research to better understand psychological disorders and perceptions of drug dependence** among students in medical institutions is highlighted.

Drug-related challenges highlighted in the interviews

- **The lack of accurate data on the number of drug users** in the country is evident.
- **The limited participation of civil society** in the design and evaluation of drug policies is emphasised.
- **The problem of abuse of psychoactive drugs**, especially among young people, is mentioned.
- There is a **lack of specific programmes to address the use of NPS**.
- **The increase in heroin use in recent years** is noteworthy.
- There is **an increase in the use of psychoactive substances and drugs via Darknet and Telegram**.
- **Financial barriers** to accessing treatment and support services are experienced.
- A challenge is **the need for intensive and frequent interaction between the regulatory, support and field levels**, which requires considerable effort to achieve effective communication between all parties involved.
- **Uzbekistan's geographical position as a major transit route for drug trafficking** is highlighted, leading to some of these substances remaining in the country, with a negative impact on Uzbek society.

4.2 Analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire

In this section, we dive into the detailed analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire developed for the second phase of CADAP 7 Outcome 1 in Central Asia, specifically in Uzbekistan. The main purpose of the questionnaire is to **collect relevant and accurate information on needs and demands in relation to drug policies in the country**.

This analysis, in combination with the review of interviews and documentation provided by Uzbek counterparts, establishes **a solid basis for generating preliminary recommendations that can be of use to government authorities**. By implementing diverse methodological approaches, it aims to obtain a comprehensive and contextualised picture of the current needs and challenges in the field of drug policy in Uzbekistan.

- **Majority consensus on the approach to drug policy in Uzbekistan**. It can be seen that there is a majority consensus on the importance of reducing both demand and the harms associated with drug use. These approaches are considered a priority in the country's drug policies.
- **Inclusion of harm reduction as an integral part of drug policy**. All survey participants consider it very important or fairly important. This suggests the importance of the inclusion of the harm reduction approach in the country's drug strategy.
- **Importance of a comprehensive and multidimensional approach in the treatment of people who use drugs**. The importance of promoting the social and occupational reintegration of drug dependent people is highlighted, as well as providing specialised medical and psychological treatment. Some respondents also mentioned the importance of implementing harm reduction programmes to minimise the risks associated with drug use and decriminalising drug use in order to reduce stigmatisation and improve access to treatment services. This indicates that there is

recognition of the need for a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to addressing drug use and its consequences.

- **Rehabilitation and social reintegration of people with drug dependence problems.** Respondents consider a variety of options relevant, such as specialised treatment programmes, support programmes for job search and vocational training, access to therapy and psychological support, and education and training programmes for relapse prevention. Encouraging participation in self-help groups and therapeutic communities, as well as specialised care for people with addictions and co-morbid mental illnesses, is also valued. However, some respondents mentioned that no work is done on the rehabilitation and social reintegration of people with drug dependence problems.
- **Significant concern about the use of non-prescription drugs containing psychotropic substances among the youth population.** This is considered to be a very important or fairly important problem in Uzbek society. Several reasons were mentioned for this, such as the continued increase in the use of medicines containing psychotropic substances and the associated negative consequences, and the increase in the use of such substances by the youth population. Some of the respondents mentioned the regulation of the sale of medicines without prescription and improved monitoring and control of the sale of such medicines in pharmacies and other establishments as possible measures to solve this problem.
- **Alcohol consumption is considered a problematic phenomenon in the country due to its consequences.** It is considered to be a very important or quite important problem in Uzbek society. Several reasons were mentioned for this, such as the high proportion of criminal acts committed under the influence of alcohol, as well as the link between alcohol abuse and the medical and social consequences associated with alcohol consumption.
- **Significant concern about HIV in the drug-using population in Uzbekistan.** Most respondents consider this to be an important and urgent concern, indicating that there is recognition of the importance of addressing HIV in this particular population. However, a smaller number of respondents consider it to be a significant concern, but insufficient attention has been paid to this issue.
- **Actions implemented in the country to address the stigma associated with drug dependence.** Several initiatives implemented in Uzbekistan to reduce stigma were mentioned, such as educational activities for employees of different governmental institutions in the country.
- **Identification of factors contributing to illicit drug trafficking in Uzbekistan.** It highlights factors such as the country's geographical location and its role as a transit hub for drugs to other countries, the use of information and communication technologies, social networking and messaging applications, and the lack of a comprehensive anti-drug strategy involving all stakeholders, including civil society groups and local communities.
- **Main weaknesses in the anti-drug strategy identified by respondents.** Emphasis is placed on the weak institutional capacity to deal with the problem of NPS, the lack of measures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of anti-drug policies and programmes, and the absence of effective harm reduction programmes for drug users and people with drug use disorders.
- **Weaknesses identified by respondents in legislation related to the drug phenomenon.** They emphasised the low investment in education and public awareness programmes on drug use and the

associated risks, as well as the absence of effective preventive measures to reduce the demand for drugs. Some respondents also highlighted as the main weaknesses of the country's anti-drug legislation the inadequate criminalisation of drug trafficking and distribution and the insufficient coordination between the different government agencies in charge of enforcing drug-related laws.

- **Importance of civil society participation in drug policy formulation and implementation.**

Respondents consider it to be very important. Different forms of participation were mentioned, such as creating spaces for dialogue and collaboration between civil society and the authorities in charge, as well as conducting public consultations and surveys and including civil society representative groups in committees and working groups.

5. Conclusions

- **Trend towards convergence of the escapist consumption model and the recreational consumption model.** In recent years, a convergence between the escapist consumption pattern represented by opioids and the recreational consumption pattern associated with synthetic drugs has been observed in the Central Asian region as a whole. This seems to be evident in Uzbekistan as well, although so far less so than in some of the neighbouring countries. This is a phenomenon that poses significant challenges for the authorities and society at large, as two distinct phenomena are now intertwined and create a complex problem.
- **Differentiated responses to the two patterns of drug use identified in the country.** In Uzbekistan, two distinct patterns of drug use are converging: a more traditional one, mainly linked to the use of opium derivatives, and a more contemporary one, related to the use of synthetic substances and NPS. In this situation, tailored and targeted strategies are essential. Traditional drug use requires a health and well-being approach, with an emphasis on harm reduction and access to medical services. On the other hand, the use of synthetic substances requires a combination of preventive and risk reduction approaches. Both strategies must also address the underlying factors that drive the use of these substances in the Uzbek context.
- **Diversification of the drug market in Uzbekistan.** The evolution of the drug market in Uzbekistan is manifested not only in the shift towards the use of recreational synthetic drugs and the non-medical use of medicines, which is reportedly concentrated especially in the city of Tashkent, but also in the increasing use of the Internet to acquire these substances in the country.
- **Changing patterns of use and profile of users.** The use of non-prescription medicines containing narcotic substances is seen to attract a wide variety of users, who are clearly distinguishable from the group using opiate drugs such as heroin. Specifically, the inclination of young people towards these drugs with psychoactive properties stands out, as they are looking for unique recreational experiences.
- **Uzbekistan's geographical location presents significant challenges in the fight against drug trafficking.** Uzbekistan, like other Central Asian countries, is strategically located on transit routes used for drug trafficking to various regions in Europe, Asia and the Global North. Despite changes in local consumption patterns, the challenge of opiate and heroin trafficking remains a major concern in the country, due to its key position as a transit point on international routes.
- **HIV infection through unsafe drug use practices.** The detection of these cases of the spread of the virus serves as a reminder of the importance of adopting preventive approaches and encouraging individual responsibility in making healthy choices in Uzbekistan. By better understanding the factors that contribute to HIV transmission and by promoting empathy and support for those affected, progress can be made towards a more aware and caring society. By combining efforts in prevention, support and understanding, this challenge can be effectively addressed and work towards reducing HIV incidence in the country.
- **Trends and variations in drug-related crime in Uzbekistan.** Significant reductions have been recorded in several aspects of drug-related crime in Uzbekistan. There has been a marked decrease in smuggling crime, with a negative change of 24%. There has also been a decrease in illegal

production, purchase, storage and other activities related to narcotic and psychotropic substances for the purpose of sale, with a decrease of approximately 13%. However, there have been significant increases in various offences related to the possession, consumption and treatment of narcotic or psychotropic substances, as well as in activities related to these substances without the purpose of sale, with an increase of more than 74%. In addition, the cultivation of illicit plants has also experienced a notable increase of 44%. These results reflect an increase in the situation of some drug-related crimes in Uzbekistan, highlighting the need to review and strengthen the measures and policies implemented to address this growing problem.

- **Trends and variations in seizures of drugs and psychotropic substances in Uzbekistan.** During the reporting period from 2017 to the first nine months of 2021, seizures of various drugs and psychotropic substances were made in Uzbekistan. These seizures can be classified into three main categories based on percentage changes. First, there are seizures that experienced a significant increase, such as heroin, psychotropic substances and hashish, with increases of 958%, 629% and 315% respectively. Secondly, there are seizures that showed a significant decrease, such as NPS with a decrease of 97%, opium with a decrease of 66% and poppy straw with a decrease of approximately 67%. Finally, seizures that decreased in intensity are identified as marijuana with a decrease of 24%. These seizures reflect the picture of drug trafficking and consumption in Uzbekistan during the period analysed, showing significant changes in the availability and demand for different substances in the country.
- **Trends and variations in HIV testing and cases by sex in Uzbekistan.** During the period 2016-2019, significant trends and variations in HIV testing and cases by sex have been observed in Uzbekistan. In this regard, it is of concern that the number of PLWH has increased by 20%, indicating the need to intensify prevention and treatment measures. In addition, there have been notable changes in HIV cases by sex in Uzbekistan over the same period. While there has been a 5.5% increase in new HIV diagnoses in men, it is encouraging to see an approximate 7% decrease in new HIV diagnoses in women.

6. Reflections as preliminary recommendations

Uzbekistan, a country in Central Asia, is facing new challenges in the field of drugs. In an ever-changing environment, Uzbekistan faces a number of complex challenges that require a review and adaptation of its current drug policies. The consumption landscape has undergone transformations, with an increase in the use of recreational and synthetic drugs, posing additional problems and risks that need to be effectively addressed. The following is a set of key recommendations to address these challenges and promote a comprehensive and balanced approach to drug policy in Uzbekistan.

It is important to note that these recommendations are offered on a preliminary basis and will be further developed and refined after the «Regional Seminar on Building and Strengthening Balanced and Evidence-Based Drug Policies» has taken place. In addition, specific actions implemented by EU Member States will be analysed to determine their relevance and usefulness for Uzbek institutions in this field.

- **Establish reliable and standardised data collection systems to monitor and evaluate** drug use in Uzbekistan.
- **Strengthen regulation and control of the sale of synthetic drugs and medicines containing psychoactive substances**, including the implementation of online monitoring measures.
- **Develop differentiated policies and programmes that effectively address both recreational and escapist use**, recognising their differences and specific needs. This will enable appropriate and effective responses to be offered in each case, adapted to the particular characteristics and risks of each type of use.
- **Promote the active and meaningful participation of civil society organisations** in the process of drug policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.
- **Implement comprehensive harm reduction programmes** that include distribution of sterile equipment, education on blood-borne diseases and support services for people affected by HIV.
- **Strengthen collaboration with international bodies and law enforcement agencies to combat online drug trafficking** and increase the capacity to detect and prosecute these illicit activities.
- **Encourage collaboration with international organisations and development agencies to seek additional funding** and resources for the health care and welfare of drug users.
- **Establish effective communication and coordination channels between the different parties involved in the implementation of anti-drug policies**, including the creation of multidisciplinary committees and working groups.

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